United Nations A/60/PV.27

General Assembly

Sixtieth session

Official Records

27th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 6 October 2005, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 62

Social development, including questions related to the world social situation and youth, ageing disabled persons and the family

Two plenary meetings devoted to the evaluation of the progress made in the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the year 2000 and Beyond

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/60/61, A/60/133, A/60/133/Corr.1 and A/60/156)

Draft resolution (A/60/L.2)

The President: I am very pleased, as President of the General Assembly, to see a record number of youth representatives in the national delegations to the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. It is a good start. Their presence is concrete evidence of the revitalization and rejuvenation often called for in these halls. It is also an encouraging indication of a growing recognition of the importance of youth participation in the implementation and evaluation of the World Programme of Action for Youth. Not only are they here, reminding us of the importance of youth being part of the decision-making processes in the world, but they are also bringing the plight of young people around the world into these halls. They are also bringing realities that we need to be aware of.

In the 10 years since the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth, there have been notable achievements, including on gender issues and in the field of education. However, much remains do be done, not least for girls in education. As the "World Youth Report 2005" — the report of the Secretary-General — so vividly describes, many young people today continue to suffer poverty, discrimination and inequality, and far too great a number still lack access to proper education and health services. Most of those who become infected with HIV/AIDS are in their teens or early twenties. In many areas, rampant unemployment dulls their ambition and undermines morale, and we know that civil conflict can have a particularly devastating effect on the young. We need only look at the outrageous phenomenon of child soldiers.

Although the World Programme of Action for Youth is still highly relevant today, in the 10 years that have passed since its adoption new challenges have emerged. In the mid-1990s, few could have predicted the enormous impact that globalization, information and communication technologies, HIV/AIDS, conflict and intergenerational relations would have on young people. Those issues will need substantive commitment and action as emerging areas of concern.

In addition to policies and programmes developed specifically for youth, the needs of young people must be better reflected in broader development agendas. A few weeks ago, the world's leaders gathered here to review progress towards the Millennium Development

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

05-53894 (E)

Goals and the reform process facing the United Nations. Intensified commitment and investment now in the Millennium Development Goals will have enormous benefits for the young people of 2015 and future generations.

Young people should be seen as our partners and a positive force in achieving the full implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. As one of the youth representatives so eloquently said yesterday at the informal, interactive round table in which I participated, the current young generation should be not the next one to fail, but the first to succeed in meeting the Millennium Development Goals. That is a challenge we should all accept, and let us now do our part to make it happen. I am sure that this meeting will bring that energy into the processes that are so necessary.

I now give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General.

The Deputy Secretary-General: I am delighted to be here today for this meeting on a subject as inspiring as it is important, and I wish to extend a special welcome to all the young representatives who are with us today.

We are gathered here because we know that young people are our future. They will inherit what we create in our time, both good and bad. Just as the United Nations Charter was written for succeeding generations, so is our present agenda intended to give those who succeed us a chance to build better lives. That applies especially to the Millennium Development Goals, which fall due 10 years from now.

Today, almost half the world's population is less than 25 years old. Mr. President, you have just shared with us the basic challenges they already face, as described in the Secretary-General's "World Youth Report 2005", released earlier this week. The challenges include 200 million youth living in poverty; 130 million youth illiterate; 88 million unemployed; and 10 million young people living with HIV/AIDS. We should add to that the distressing statistics about children, who will make up the youth of 2015. A quarter of all children in the developing world are malnourished, as are half of all children living in sub-Saharan Africa and southern Asia; 11 million children under the age of five die each year from preventable and treatable diseases; and 115 million children are currently not in school.

All those factors bring home to us the need to redouble our efforts to reach the Millennium Development Goals.

Today, we mark the tenth anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth. The adoption of that document was a milestone in that it was the first global blueprint for effective national policies on youth. It highlighted 10 priority areas, drawn together in a comprehensive and practical policy plan.

In the 10 years that have passed since, dramatic changes have taken place that have had profound effects on the lives of young people — from the consequences of globalization and the rapid development of information and communication technology to the devastating spread of HIV/AIDS.

Those upheavals only serve to underline the need for young people to be involved in decisions that affect their lives — a principle that forms one of the priorities of the World Programme of Action. I am delighted that, today, the General Assembly is acting to put that principle into practice by inviting a youth representative to address the Assembly and report to it the results of the round-table discussion held yesterday with young leaders. Allow me to recognize Ms. Itzel Barrera de Diego, who will report to the Assembly in a moment. I look forward to hearing from her.

Above all, I hope this occasion will be followed by concrete action out there on the ground, where it matters most. Real youth participation must come at every level — locally, regionally and nationally.

On this tenth anniversary, let us recognize that young people form an enormous resource for the benefit of society; that they are crucial partners in our work to reach the Millennium Development Goals; and that their energy is our most valuable asset in our efforts to build a more peaceful, democratic and prosperous world.

The President: I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her reminder that we should always keep before us the realities out there in the field. I am sure that participants here will bring those realities into this Hall.

I now give the floor to Ms. Itzel Barrera de Diego, who, as youth representative of Mexico, will present a summary of the informal, interactive round-table discussion held yesterday afternoon on the theme "Young people: making commitments matter".

Ms. Barrera de Diego (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Many generations have had the opportunity to eradicate poverty, but we will be the first to succeed.

In accordance with resolution 59/148, and in response to its request to present a summary of the round-table discussion on making commitments matter, the youth representatives have asked me to present those results.

As members know, the discussion was organized around the three areas into which the 15 youth priorities were categorized. The format was interactive, allowing many delegations and representatives of non-governmental organizations to air their views.

First, with respect to youth and its relationship to the global economy, the disparities and difficulties of integration were of widespread concern. Marginalization resulting from the lack of access to new communications technology and high-quality universal education were only a few of the issues repeatedly raised. Efforts to narrow the gap between rural and urban development and proposals concerning self-employment were also frequently cited.

The issue of making agriculture an attractive and profitable activity as a solution to rural exodus and unemployment was strongly contrasted with the droughts and political realities in certain countries. We must point out that agriculture is not the only solution for rural development. Other ways to approach that challenge must therefore be found.

Secondly, the subject of youth and civil society was the focus of most of the debate, demonstrating that there is no link between young people and apathy. The world's young people are using their leisure time to become involved in volunteer work. We are developing innovative and concrete responses to the challenges we face. We are demonstrating the ability to relate to marginalized groups. Those approaches, together with the knowledge of previous generations, will have unprecedented results in terms of successful integration policies.

In that connection, and in keeping with the need to be active participants in our own processes, we propose the following: the creation of a United Nations youth advisory council based on voluntarism, so that it will not represent a financial burden for the Organization; a mandate of helping Member States bring youth delegates to participate in General Assembly sessions; and the inclusion of a youth perspective in public policies through national youth councils.

Because of the factors I have cited, an alarming number of young people find themselves in at-risk situations. Moreover, there are cases of young people suffering from problems related to poor health, HIV/AIDS infection, drug abuse, youth delinquency and involvement in armed conflict, all at the same time. The assumption that young people's health is indestructible is a misconception that not only delays, but in many cases hinders, the establishment of preventive health programmes.

It is important to point out that countries need effective demobilization and reintegration programmes for young people involved in armed conflicts. We urge countries that have successful programmes to share their experiences with the international community. However, the implementation of such programmes will be very difficult without the necessary resources.

We also need to point out that the violent stereotypes that have stigmatized young people for so long were countered by the mere presence of all of us in this forum. We must understand that we are the potential, the solution, the force for change — and I say "must" because young people and adults must understand what youth means: it means potential energy, the solutions. But that potential energy must be utilized and protected. Therefore, we urge all Governments to support the institutionalization of youth participation at all levels, and we welcome the efforts to conclude a United Nations convention on the rights of young people.

Finally, I wish to draw the attention of the Assembly to the fact that this round table enabled us to recognize not only our differences, but also the similarities of the challenges that must be faced by young people throughout the world. These are needs that know no geographic, linguistic or gender barriers or any other distinctions, and therefore require our immediate attention and resolution.

We are privileged young people. We are here 10 years after the establishment of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, but in very different conditions. Yes, members of the General Assembly, the difference lies in the fact that this time, with your help, we will not have to wait another 10 years to have the privilege to address you.

Many generations have had the opportunity to eradicate poverty, but we will be the first to be successful.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Portugal to introduce draft resolution A/60/L.2.

Mr. Salgueiro (Portugal): On the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, it is a great honour for Portugal to present draft resolution A/60/L.2, entitled "Policies and programmes involving youth", on behalf of the 49 sponsors listed in that document and the following additional countries, which have joined the list: Argentina, Bangladesh, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Iceland, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Madagascar, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Norway, Peru, the Republic of Moldova, San Marino, the Sudan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, the United States of America and Uruguay.

Ten years after the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, that we are once again reaffirming the World Programme of Action is an important milestone. Participation by young people at all levels of society, stronger partnerships aimed at increasing investment in young people and holistic and integrated youth policies are just a few of the tools identified in this draft resolution that can enable us to move forward and create a better world for the younger generation. We also believe that better and more expeditious coordination among the organizations, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system can play a key role in that regard. In addition, we recognize the important work being done by the Youth Employment Network and encourage Member States, the United Nations and partner organizations to strengthen and expand the Network at its various levels.

The five priority areas identified in the Secretary-General's *World Youth Report 2003* (*E/CN.5/2003/4*) — namely, the mixed impact of globalization on young women and men; use of and access to information and communication technologies; the dramatic increase in human immunodeficiency virus infection among young people and the epidemic's impact on their lives; active involvement by young people in armed conflict, both as victims and as perpetrators; and the increased importance of addressing intergenerational issues in an ageing society — are established in the draft resolution as additional priorities of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. In that regard, we look forward to the supplement to the World Programme of Action, which will be presented to us at the forty-fifth session of the Commission for Social Development.

It gives me great pleasure to have so many youth representatives present here today in the Assembly. That is testimony to the valuable role and input that young people can have in the work of our Organization and in society as a whole. Young people must be heard; they must be considered as part of the solution, not as the problem.

I would like to introduce the following revisions to the draft resolution. We would like to amend paragraph 10 to read as follows:

> "Invites all Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to contribute, inter alia, to the United Nations Youth Fund for the participation of youth representatives in national delegations, in particular from developing countries".

We would also like to add a new operative paragraph 11 bis, which reads as follows:

> "Calls on Governments, the United Nations system, youth organizations and other relevant stakeholders to strengthen efforts aimed at implementation of the 10 priority areas contained in the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond".

Last but not least, my delegation would like to thank all delegations that participated in the negotiations on this important text for their efforts and cooperation. I think that, as a result, we have achieved a text that will move us forward. We hope that this draft resolution will be adopted by consensus with the broad support of all delegations.

The President: Before calling on the first speaker in the debate, I would like to turn to several organizational matters pertaining to the conduct of this meeting. In my letter of 29 September to all Permanent Representatives, I urged speakers to limit their

statement in this debate to four minutes. In view of the large number of delegations already on the list of speakers — 48 so far — I appeal to speakers to cooperate in this respect. To assist speakers in managing their time, a light system has been installed at the rostrum, which functions as follows. A green light will be activated at the start, an orange light will be activated 30 seconds before the end of the four minutes and a red light will be activated when the four-minute limit has elapsed. I recall that a similar rule was also applied at the summit meeting for our Presidents, Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers. It is an acceptable practice which I hope will be respected.

Mr. McGhee (United Kingdom): In the interest of brevity, I shall deliver only part of my statement as prepared. The full text will be circulated in writing. I have the honour, in my capacity as United Kingdom youth delegate to the tenth anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth, to present this statement on behalf of the European Union. The following countries align themselves with this statement: Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Croatia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Norway, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova.

The European Union warmly welcomes this opportunity to join with other Member States, civil society and all youth delegates present here today in celebrating the progress made in achieving greater opportunities for young people. But the European Union also recognizes that many challenges remain, challenges that were highlighted in the 10 priority areas of the World Programme of Action, as well as in the five new priorities identified in the World Youth Report 2003. Today provides the occasion to reaffirm our shared commitment to the World Programme of Action for Youth and to addressing the needs of young people all over the world.

The year 2005 has been a crucial year for advancing the opportunities for young people at the international level. The recent millennium review summit reinforced the international community's commitment to young people. Achieving the Millennium Development Goals will shape the world in which today's children will reach adulthood, and many of the Goals address issues of central concern for young people now, such as poverty, education, employment and HIV/AIDS. The European Union welcomes the work of UNICEF, which is the leading United Nations organization for young people, and pays tribute to UNICEF for driving this agenda forward.

The European Union remains committed to the biggest social challenge of the twenty-first century: the elimination of poverty. The European Union is committed to doubling its development assistance by 2010. Significant steps have also been taken to reduce the burden of debt on the most heavily indebted poor countries. All these steps will help lift young people from poverty.

But further progress must be made. The European Union calls upon all donors to move speedily towards the goal of 0.7 per cent of their gross national income for development assistance and upon developing country Governments to prepare ambitious national poverty reduction strategies that recognize the specific needs of young people. The European Union welcomes the fact that young people are increasingly being consulted in drafting Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. But a great deal more needs to be done to highlight the needs of young people. Youth should be mainstreamed into poverty reduction strategies and young people must be consulted on policy relating to those strategies.

Young people are particularly vulnerable to unemployment. Youth unemployment rates are typically two to three times higher than for others, and young women are particularly at risk. Decent work is the most effective way out of poverty. The European Union urges an increased commitment to youth employment initiatives at national and international levels and is itself working to attract more people into employment and to reduce unemployment as one of Europe's top priorities.

The European Union welcomes the progress made by the Secretary-General's Youth Employment Network and encourages its further expansion to facilitate the implementation of national action plans for youth employment. There is much to learn via this network through exchanging experiences and ideas from both developed and developing countries. Practical implementation on the ground will be of critical importance in the coming year.

To help meet its commitment to youth employment, the European Union is investing more in human capital through better education and skills, including through the European Youth Pact for Young

People adopted in February 2005. Education is crucial if young people are to be able to benefit from employment opportunities. In 2000, over 100 million primary-school-age children all over the world were still not in education, and over 100 million young people lacked effective reading and writing skills. Efforts must be redoubled to meet the Millennium Goals for education by investing in quality education that will enable all young people, boys and girls, to attain decent work as a first step towards competing effectively in today's global economy.

The European Union fully recognizes the critical contribution that young people can make to decision-making. Education plays a crucial role in providing young people with the skills needed for active citizenship. The inclusion of young people in so many delegations here today is evidence of the improving dialogue between Governments and young people and the incorporation of their valuable input on issues that affect them.

Across the European Union, there are an increasing number of youth programmes aimed at developing cooperation on a wide range of activities between young people in different Member States and beyond. Bringing together young people from different backgrounds and from different countries helps combat negative prejudices and stereotypes. Young people are key to creating the tolerant society in which we all want to live.

In addition to its continued strong support of the 10 priorities identified in the World Programme of Action in 1995, the European Union also attaches critical importance to the five additional areas identified in the World Youth Report 2003. Addressing exclusion, discrimination and disadvantage in regard to youth is of fundamental importance if the European Union is to meet its vision of a Europe — and a world — that is socially inclusive as well as economically dynamic.

And, of course, all this needs to happen with the full and effective participation of young people. We must be recognized as partners in this work. We are a positive force for social and economic development. Youth issues should not be considered in isolation from those of other generations.

I would like to briefly finish with some personal comments on behalf of the young people in the United Kingdom.

Before coming to New York, the three United Kingdom youth representatives undertook a consultation exercise with young people across the United Kingdom to hear their views. In our consultation, we found that young people expect more from education. There is a greater need for the mandatory provision of citizenship education. Young people want to understand democratic systems locally, nationally and internationally. They emphasize the need to be fully prepared for life and therefore support the provision of skills classes in areas such as budgeting, home economics and independent life. Bearing in mind the high levels of teenage pregnancy in the United Kingdom, they also want all education authorities and youth providers to offer sexual health education.

Young people are not just the future — we are the present. We have a right to be involved in all decisions. Youth participation is essential. We appreciate the existence of youth parliaments in our country and respectfully request the development of more youth-led organizations worldwide.

I ask for recognition, involvement and understanding of youth. I ask for implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth. Ten years have passed; it is now time for action.

Mr. Banze (Mozambique): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC): Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and my own country, Mozambique.

The States members of SADC believe that, 10 years after the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, this meeting should be not just an opportunity for review and appraisal, but also a platform for rededication and commitment to the 10 priority areas affecting young people identified by the General Assembly in the World Programme. This meeting must therefore devise clear, effective and concrete strategies to nudge the process of implementation forward in order to ensure its real meaning to youth across the globe.

SADC member States, individually and collectively, have made significant progress in the area of youth development and empowerment, although

there are still challenges and constraints to contend with. Most of the 14 member States have adopted national youth policies.

The States members of SADC endorse the Secretary-General's recommendation, contained in document A/60/61, that youth concerns be mainstreamed into poverty reduction strategies and initiatives, as we believe that youth, particularly those living in rural areas, which constitute the majority of that segment of society in our countries, should be consulted whenever we address strategies affecting their well-being.

We are gratified by reports concerning an overall increase in the number of young people completing both primary and secondary education. Nevertheless, we are also genuinely concerned at the fact that 113 million children are currently out of school. We therefore believe that we should all heed the call of the Secretary-General to strengthen our efforts to ensure universal access to education for all young people, particularly girls. We also agree with the Secretary-General that we should not focus only on providing universal education, but that more emphasis should be placed on quality education. More often than not, the efforts of our Governments to provide good quality education, including the use of information and communication technologies, are hampered by a lack of resources. We call upon our development partners to continue to assist us in that regard.

Youth unemployment remains one of our greatest challenges. In our national development strategies, we are striving to create opportunities for full, productive and decent employment for youth by enacting youth employment strategies, entrepreneurial training, microcredit schemes, vocational training and career guidance, good leadership training, labour intensive programmes, and skill training in information and communication technologies as part of our efforts to achieve the Millennium Developments Goals. While we are grateful to those donors and agencies that are assisting our countries in that regard, we encourage other relevant stakeholders to assist and support our efforts to realizing that goal, which would otherwise remain an elusive dream.

Youth participation in the construction of a better future strengthens Governments in their efforts to find appropriate solutions to the most pressing problems that our youths are facing. In that regard, we support the increased participation of youth in issues that affect them.

The high prevalence of HIV/AIDS among youth, as well as conflicts, have a negative impact on their development and consequently on the achievement of their full potential. We all agree that any strategy to combat HIV/AIDS should involve first and foremost prevention, treatment, care and support. Young people, who are the future of the world, must be provided with information and education on life skills that will empower them to make better choices and decisions about their health.

The SADC member States continue to place special emphasis on the girl child, as we strongly believe that the girl child is the woman of tomorrow, whom we should, as a matter of duty, free from inheriting a life of prejudice, fear and want. However, despite the standing commitments we have undertaken in the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, the girl child of today still faces a plethora of problems and hardships. In our attempt to highlight the plight of the girl child, SADC member States have submitted a draft resolution on the issue, which is considered every two years by the General Assembly. We call on all Member States to continue to support the draft resolution to be introduced during the current session of the General Assembly, the sole aim of which is to give real meaning to the lives of girls across the globe.

In conclusion, we would like to highlight the need for the adoption at this session of the five priority areas identified since the adoption of the World Programme of Action. We in SADC pledge to recommit ourselves to the full and accelerated implementation of the World Programme. We stand ready to cooperate with other Member States in all efforts geared towards translating all 15 priority areas into reality.

The President: I would like to remind members that we have only two meetings devoted to this item, and that 43 speakers remain on the list. I would therefore propose that the list of speakers be closed as of now.

It was so decided.

Ms. Loguzzo (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina is speaking on behalf of the Rio Group.

The Rio Group countries deem the situation of our youth to be a priority and a challenge. In that sense, we are grateful for the organization of these meetings, which will allow us to review the progress achieved in the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, to which we committed ourselves 10 years ago.

Ten years after the adoption of the World Programme, we acknowledge that all the issues cited therein remain relevant, although inadequate for young people constantly exposed to new challenges, such as globalization, access to new technologies, the spread of HIV/AIDS, natural disasters, and the expansion of armed conflicts. We hope that the Commission on Social Development at its next session will consider the inclusion of those five main areas, as well as other emerging issues, in order to draft a supplement to the Programme of Action.

Global realities show that the young suffer from hunger and poverty, especially in rural zones, where education and employment opportunities are limited. On the other hand, they are vulnerable to such problems as drug addiction, HIV/AIDS, alcoholism and delinquency. In that context, it is indispensable to have educational and prevention programmes for youth that will encourage their comprehensive development, so that they can make a positive contribution to society.

The Rio Group clearly understands the need to renew our commitment to our youth in order to eradicate poverty and unemployment. To do that, it is indispensable to recognize the specific needs of youth and to incorporate young people in the development of national, regional and international strategies against poverty and unemployment. Strategies to achieve productive employment for youth should try to make employment opportunities compatible with their being in school, as that will afford them better work opportunities in future.

For young people from low-income homes it is common to drop out of school at an early age. That group begins looking for jobs requiring few qualifications, and that in turn increases the possibility of their being poor in their adult life. Therefore, it is a double challenge: on the one hand, the need to keep adolescents in the educational system, and on the other, to create jobs for youth that are consonant with their skills. High unemployment rates even for the more qualified young people demonstrate the great difficulties facing their integration into the workforce and, as a result, the depression and lack of well-being among youth.

The Rio Group countries are pooling our efforts to reach the Millennium Development Goals, because we believe those Goals also address young people. In that respect, we would like to highlight some regional cooperation initiatives, such as the Horizontal Technical Cooperation Group on HIV/AIDS and the spread of successful experiments such as "Bolsa Familia", which is a subsidy programme that requires periodic visits to health services and that children stay in school. We also encourage full gender equality, which will eliminate stereotypes of the image of women in order to allow egalitarian access to education and employment for women.

We are concerned by the incidence of HIV/AIDS among youth. We believe that to reverse the spread of that disease we must work both on promotion of safe sexual behaviour and on prevention through social communication campaigns. As part of a general health strategy, it is important to incorporate sex education, including information on sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS and drug use, in both in teachers' training programmes and in educational programmes for adolescents.

We are convinced that in order to adequately evaluate the current situation of youth, we must include young people themselves. In that connection, for the first time in our region, the sixteenth World Festival of Youth and Students was held in Caracas in August 2005 — a demonstration of the permanent and tireless struggle for youth and their rights. At that event, young people themselves reiterated the importance of coordinating the various segments of society in demanding peace and security, access to universal and free education and health care, employment for all, elimination of discrimination of all kinds and a new international order that would eliminate growing poverty and foreign debt.

Some of our countries have instituted a national policy for youth so that the young people may participate in shaping the societies in which they live while seeking to improve themselves and realize their full potential.

As I indicated in the beginning of my statement, the Rio Group countries attach very high priority to our

youth. We would have liked to have more Latin American young people participating at this event, as well as at other relevant United Nations events. But as always, we are faced with budget restrictions. We hope that as a result of the resolution we will adopt today, the participation of more young people from developing countries will be possible at such meetings, using, inter alia, resources from the United Nations Youth Fund.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Azalina Othman Said, Minister for Youth and Sports of Malaysia.

Ms. Othman Said (Malaysia): On behalf of the people and Government of Malaysia, I take this opportunity to congratulate the Secretary-General on his timely decision to convene this congregation of distinguished personalities to deliberate upon youth perspectives, policies and interventions across the globe.

The tenth anniversary celebrations of the World Programme of Action on Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, introduced in 1995, is yet another attestation of the strategic implementation of youth development programmes by the United Nations.

For Malaysia, our National Youth Consultative Council, established in 1972, is the highest body that acts as a youth parliament. It provides a forum for both governmental and non-governmental organizations to meet, discuss and debate common issues related to youth development programmes. In 1985, in conjunction with the United Nations International Youth Year, Malaysia formulated a national youth policy. That policy was further reviewed in 1997 and became known as the National Youth Development Policy, providing guidelines for developing and implementing programmes. In 2004, the Ministry embarked on an 11-point Malaysian Youth Development Action Plan, which in many ways parallels the World Programme of Action. That blueprint provides the national framework to spearhead youth development through 2020, the year in which Malaysia aspires to achieve developed-nation status.

One of the outcomes of the Malaysian Youth Development Action Plan is the creation of the Malaysian Institute for Research in Youth Development. Among the Institute's main objectives are to conduct research and provide better understanding of the needs and issues relevant to young people for the different segments of society. To ensure that our youth planning is on the right track to achieve our objectives, we are preparing to embark on an empirical study to determine a Malaysian youth behavioural and well-being index. It is hoped that those indices will provide the Government with more accurate and measurable norms to chart the progress of young people.

At the same time, another instrument, the Malaysian Youth Act, is being enacted to give direction for proper and systematic youth development. The Act will also encompass appropriate intervention from other ministries and relevant agencies to improve coordination and implementation of policies and guidelines pertaining to youth development. The Youth Act will ultimately serve to protect and defend the rights and interests of the younger generation as it promotes and incorporates an effective delivery system.

Malaysia recognizes youth as the agents of change. They are supposed to be receptive to new ideas and the adoption of new technologies and are willing to make changes. To harness the potential of the younger generation, the national Youth Development Plan revolves around a three-pronged strategy: leadership training, acquisition of vocational and technical skills, and an entrepreneurship programme.

Malaysia, like other nations, has not been spared the social maladies that accompany development and modernization. With progress come the looming threats of HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, premarital sex and teenage pregnancy, to mention a few. To counter such negative influences the Malaysian Government has designed several intervention programmes.

Rakan Muda — Young Friends — is an outreach programme that addresses social ills by offering avenues for young people between the age of 15 to 25 to fill their time productively through nine lifestyle programme packages. Introduced in 1994, it is now being revitalized to meet present and future challenges in the midst of globalization and an ever-changing youth culture.

Another intervention programme addressing drug abuse and HIV is the Belia Benci Dadah — Youth Against Drugs — campaign. That campaign empowers youth to make their own decisions on the options and choices in life. Built on a youth-for-youth concept, it also mobilizes university and college students to play a

part in disseminating information on the harmful effects of drug abuse.

In that regard, and with a view to increasing youth participation and involvement in its work, Malaysia wishes to propose that the United Nations consider the following.

First, a youth development index could be formulated to provide a standard indicator that would help monitor and evaluate progress made by the World Programme of Action. Second, we could establish a world economic youth fund to provide financial assistance to entrepreneurship programmes for young people. Third, we could conduct regional consultations with Member States and youth organizations through the Regional Commissions of the United Nations to assist and evaluate the implementation of the World Programme of Action. Fourth, we could continue the World Youth Forum. Fifth, the Youth Unit could be strengthened and possibly expanding, to give due attention to the growing importance of issues related to youth and their participation in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Sixth, we should continue the informal interactive round-table discussions and organize other events to provide more opportunities and encourage greater youth participation in areas of specific interest and immediate concern to youth in the United Nations. Seventh, we should provide assistance to Member States, upon request, for the participation of youth representatives on a continuing basis during relevant discussions in the General Assembly, as well as in the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions.

The time has come for us to grow younger. The age of youth is here. The United Nations needs to be the path finder for all of the world's youth. It needs to chart a clear course, because, very soon, it will be the young people who will be showing us the way.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency, Ms. Lena Hallengren, Minister for Pre-School Education, Youth Affairs and Adult Learning of Sweden.

Ms. Hallengren (Sweden): I am happy to see so many youth delegates here today.

I would like to align myself with the statement made earlier by the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union (EU).

It is an honour for me to be here today, together with the Swedish youth representative, Hanna Hallin.

I am often asked why a specific youth policy is needed. I always answer, "Because youth are facing similar challenges". It is about a good education. It is about establishing oneself on the labour market and getting one's first own place to live. That must be a possibility for all young people, women and men, regardless of whether they are rich or poor or live in the North or the South, and regardless of what background they are from.

The Swedish Government, as well as the National Council of Swedish Youth Organizations, strongly support the reaffirmation of the World Programme of Action for Youth. We also attach critical importance to the five additional areas identified in the 2003 World Youth Report (*A/58/79*). Swedish national youth policy has been greatly inspired by, and is very much in line with, the Programme, with regard to both the cross-sectoral way of considering youth issues and to the prioritized areas.

Major improvements have been made in the situation of young women and young men in many areas, but we are still facing great challenges. Over 200 million young people still live in poverty. Some 130 million are illiterate. Almost 25 per cent of those who live with HIV globally are under the age of 25. Youth unemployment worldwide has increased during the past decade.

We know that in periods of economic recession, youth are among the worst hit. We also know from studies that being unemployed when young affects one's future opportunities in the labour market. Promoting youth employment is therefore one of the top priorities for the Swedish Government. Recently, in response to an initiative by France, Germany, Spain and Sweden, the EU has also made a stronger commitment to the promotion of youth employment through the European Youth Pact.

As was discussed at the round table yesterday, we must make commitments matter, and take concrete action. Work has to be done at the local, regional, national and international levels and in partnership with civil society and other concerned actors. Youth and their organizations should play a leading role in that work.

The implementation of cross-sectoral integrated national youth policies is vital. So is a renewed and continuous commitment to implementing the World Programme of Action for Youth, the Millennium Development Goals and other international agreements.

We often talk about young people as the future. But let us never forget that they are an important part of society today. It is not for them, but together with them, that we should work to realize the objectives of the World Programme of Action.

With your permission, Mr. President, I will now yield to floor to the Swedish youth representative, Ms. Hanna Hallin.

Ms. Hallin (Sweden): Imagine a world in which millions of young people do not die before the age of 20 because of poverty, pregnancy, conflict, the lack of health services or HIV/AIDS; a world in which young women and young men are able to read and have decent work with a decent salary; a world in which young people are free to seek their identity, without fear of repression, exclusion or discrimination. Imagine a world in which the voices of youth count.

As the Swedish youth delegate, I am honoured to address the Assembly today. There are more youth delegates present here than ever before. This is a welcome tenth anniversary birthday gift from those Governments to the youth of their nations and of the world. Governments must continue to include youth representatives in their national delegations, and allow us to participate and be listened to. This is about making commitments matter and, first and foremost, about the long-term development of each society and the world at large.

Young women and young men are today a major force in global development. Young people, when given the opportunity, are initiating a vast number of projects to improve life in their communities. Such projects include combating HIV/AIDS and drug abuse, promoting a clean environment and initiating peer-to-peer education.

Youth-led initiatives must be facilitated and, when effective, turned into partnerships with Governments, non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations. The establishment of independent youth organizations must be an essential and uncomplicated process, and youth organizations must have access to public and private funding.

Young people should be seen as equal partners in the process of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. I stress here the significance of viewing the World Programme of Action for Youth as the key to accomplishing the eight development goals. In this work we ask for the recognition and involvement of youth, for tolerance and understanding, and for implementation.

At the same time, young people are marginalized when Governments do not respect the right to health, education and decent work. We are also marginalized when we are not allowed to express our sexual, religious or indigenous identity without fear for our lives. For instance, today young people flee their countries because of their sexual identity. It should be every person's right to seek his or her identity; that is a question of human dignity.

Hence, every national youth policy should include measurable goals on how to improve the situation for all young women and young men, with special attention to marginalized youth, in order to secure our full participation in society.

There are no adequate excuses. Young people's needs must be taken into account, and young people must be able to lead the development of their societies. We want a world in which young people do not die before the age of 20; where young people are able to read and have decent work with a decent salary. We want a world where young people are free to seek their identity and where the voices of youth count.

It is time for action. We all know what to do; now let us do it. The world that we are aiming for is well within our reach. We have the goals, the means and the motivation to reach it. Let us prove that our common efforts in the World Programme of Action for Youth were not in vain. Let young people be the change.

The President: The division of labour between the representatives of Sweden symbolizes the need for Governments to work closely with youth representatives. However, the sharing of statements is not the normal practice in the General Assembly; we will make today's meeting exceptional in that respect. I am eager to make the point that that is not precedent-setting for future General Assembly meetings.

However, it is a great symbol of how we have to work together.

Ms. Yao (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): We are celebrating today the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. Although this Hall has never before welcomed so many representatives of youth, there are still not enough young people here. Too many of them must settle for watching from the sidelines as decisions are taken that will affect our common future.

The needs of youth have never before been defined so specifically, yet actions continue to fall short of expectations. We hope that an increasing number of States will focus on the need to act. That is why we ask all States to recognize young people and to include them in their decision-making processes. We ask for tolerance, and we ask that the World Programme of Action for Youth be implemented.

One of the issues addressed in the Programme of Action is health. Youth is vulnerable. Many young people live in insecurity and fear the future. According to the 2001 *World Health Report*, almost one out of four young people has behavioural problems. Causes of mental illness vary from one country to another and from one person to another. But one thing is universal: the need to have a useful occupation in the context of a solid social network. Social integration, access to education and training, as well as job security, are what enable young people to find their place in society. We need a healthy youth in order to build a healthy society.

Alone we cannot build such a social network, or find lasting solutions, but together we can do this. Together we can integrate young people into our societies and support their development. Together we can open up the labour market to them and give them prospects for the future. Together we can strengthen their communities and pave the way for them towards a promising future.

We would like to draw the attention of public opinion to the mental health of young people and to note that targeted measures must be taken in the areas of labour policies and the social integration of youth. We would like to see national prevention programmes as well as local and regional plans of action to reduce the incidence of mental problems among young people.

Finally, we would ask that youth be involved in processes established to resolve that problem. We want to participate. Young people are here today, and they are ready to shoulder their responsibilities in the building of our common future. We want to participate in the process of dialogue and in the actions taken, and we want to act together to implement ideas that have been jointly developed.

We want to be partners. To do so, we need your experience and your trust. We need your support. The United Nations will be strengthened by common action on our wishes. Thus we should work together so that our wishes today can become reality tomorrow. It is time to act. We all know what we have to do. Therefore, without waiting any longer, let us do it.

Mr. Solano (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to congratulate you, Sir, and the members of your Bureau on your election, and to reiterate what was stated by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Rio Group. Costa Rica would like to comment on some points that are of particular interest to us.

Ten years ago we adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. Today we are meeting here to commemorate that decision and to review our actions, celebrate our progress and share our concerns. Young people are not only the future; they are also strategic stakeholders today as well as first-class citizens. We therefore reiterate our belief in the need to take concrete action to ensure their genuine participation in decision-making; promote their full employment in conditions of dignity; eradicate hunger and poverty; guarantee their access to adequate and comprehensive health care; combat the scourges that threaten them, such as crime, conflicts and HIV/AIDS; and promote solidarity among generations.

Costa Rica is in favour of active participation by young people at the national and international levels. Nationally, we have committed ourselves to a governmental approach that ensures their participation. On the understanding that it is the Government's responsibility to promote forward-looking actions at the State level and to undertake medium- and long-term projects, based on participation and social dialogue, that transcend political and electoral cycles. We should not shy away from taking common decisions, working together and committing ourselves to building jointly a culture of participation in public policy.

With the support of the United Nations Population Fund and of the "State of the nation" programme, we have elaborated a plan of action on public policy for young people that proposes concrete action in four main areas: education, health, employment and participation.

In keeping with a law passed in 2002, Costa Rica agreed to establish a National Assembly of Youth charged with obtaining information on, discussing, changing and adopting public policies concerning young people, thus making it the institution most important to the youth of Costa Rica. This is an unprecedented step in the strategy aimed at promoting decision-making by young citizens; we are particularly proud of it.

In the international area, we agree that it would be a good practice if, at major United Nations events at which the subject of youth is discussed, young people formed part of official delegations. Let us recall here, however, that a lack of resources hampers this, and, in many cases, prevents it entirely. We therefore welcome the call made in the draft resolution which, thanks to the leadership of the delegation of Portugal, we will adopt later today, on Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to ensure the official participation of young people in their delegations, particularly from developing countries, including through the use of the United Nations Youth Fund.

The number of young people worldwide stands today at 1.553 billion, 85 per cent of whom live in developing countries. These numbers make it clear that the challenge of promoting a climate conducive to maximizing the potential of young people, and of all persons, is greatest in those countries that have the least financial, economic and technological resources to do so.

It is unacceptable that, in a world with a food surplus, more than 900 million people suffer from hunger. It is equally unacceptable that we are wasting the potential contributions of at least 88 million unemployed young people. Many more are under-employed in the unstructured economy.

The reports that have been submitted for our consideration are evidence of the fact that, while we have made progress in certain areas, we are far from having obtained encouraging results. Our policies, as indicated in the report on the world social situation, must be restructured, as they are creating or promoting trends that are morally and politically unacceptable.

Solidarity lies in the belief that we are all in the same boat and should be reflected, inter alia, in the fulfilment of our commitments to international cooperation. We reiterate our recognition of those countries that have already fulfilled their commitments or are about to do so, and we renew our appeal to everyone to shoulder their responsibility together today to guarantee a viable tomorrow.

We share the concern expressed in the "World Youth Report 2005" about the advance of HIV/AIDS and its particular impact, especially among our young women. The current generation of youth has not known a world without AIDS. We are convinced that, in order to eradicate that scourge, young people must participate in defining and implementing national and international strategies in that area.

Our country has encouraged a youth project known as "Hands to work", which advocates a comprehensive approach to health care and incorporates human rights, youth, gender, community participation and social inclusion issues. We feel that it will help us to obtain positive results and will therefore make it available to the members of the international community.

I wish to share our concern over the fact that young people are among the most active sectors of the population in terms of criminality. The fact that most prison inmates are men should serve as a wake-up call and prompt us to consider the issue in depth and take corrective measures. Our twenty-first century should focus on the socialization of our young people. Costa Rica calls on the United Nations system, and in particular on those agencies responsible for youth, to incorporate that element into the preparation of relevant reports and studies and to propose measures that States might use in confronting that situation.

Ten years ago, we identified 10 priority areas in the Programme of Action being considered today. Those issues remain as relevant as ever to the youth of today and of the future. We understand, however, that the world is changing, and changing quickly. We therefore support, without prejudice to the identification of new measures that may be considered in the future, the inclusion of the five new concerns proposed by the Secretary-General in his "World Youth

Report 2005", supplementing the priorities of the World Programme of Action.

Some have said that youth is a disease that is cured by time. We disagree with that diagnosis. Far from being a disease, youth is a cure. Youth is dreams; it is ideals, hopes, proposals, solutions and the present. It is a motor of change and an actor in development. In that faith, I have the honour to reiterate Costa Rica's full support for the Ibero-American Convention on the Rights of Youth, which we will sign in the next few days in the beautiful city of Badajoz, Spain.

Mr. Ahmed (Pakistan): I feel highly privileged to represent the youth of Pakistan at this forum today. I represent the part of a global community that is imbued with an ideal vision driven by lofty goals and fired by a desire to achieve the most with scarce resources.

A number of the world's leading scientists, engineers, doctors, bankers and sportsmen come from Pakistan. While we take great pride in their accomplishments, we confess with a heavy heart that there have been many other dynamic souls who have not been able to realize their potential due to insufficient opportunities and inadequate resources.

There are about 35 million youth in my country; young women represent 48 per cent of that number. As is rightly pointed out by the Secretary-General, poverty and associated problems remain a major impediment to the progress of youth worldwide. Our nation economy has shown a strong recovery in the last five years, and we achieved a growth rate of 8.4 per cent last year — the highest in Asia. Despite that, the budgetary constraints on youth and social welfare areas are a serious issue. The Government is striving hard to tackle the resource shortage, but it is a Herculean task in the face of the twin menaces of unemployment and poverty.

Undaunted, we are steadfast in our struggle to rise high. We prefer to take the lead and do what we can to improve our conditions. One example is the increasing number of young, successful information technology entrepreneurs in Pakistan. Taking advantage of the improved investment climate in the country, young people are initiating small-scale business ventures in numbers never seen in the history of our region.

We have a highly educated and modern human resource base. To catapult the efforts of youth, the Government has established a small and medium-sized enterprise development authority, which provides loans of up to $25,000.

Around 65 per cent of young people live in the rural regions. To help that crucial cohort, the Khushali Bank has been established with capital of $28 million for extending soft loans to the unemployed in rural regions. Young women constitute 35 per cent of the Bank's clientele.

In a special project launched earlier this year, 29 of the poorest districts were selected, where 500,000 girl students in 5,000 schools are receiving cooked meals. Through another programme, girls living in rural areas are being given free uniforms and textbooks, with a monthly stipend, until they reach the sixth grade.

Islam elevated the status of women and mandated their rights, which include equal access to education, among other things. While we have come a long way, more needs to be done to ensure the greater involvement and retention of girls in schools, as well as their increased participation in public life.

As we persevere to achieve our development goals, being global citizens we look towards the international community. Only together can we succeed and build on what we have achieved in the World Programme of Action for Youth. We must do what we can at the United Nations and in our respective countries to influence policies and actions for youth so that they will be truly beneficial to us.

Mr. Jiang Guangping (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First, please allow me to thank you, Sir, for convening this important meeting today. The Chinese Government and Chinese youth highly appreciate the General Assembly's convening two plenary meetings on youth issues against the backdrop of the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations.

Ten years ago, the United Nations adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. We meet here today to evaluate globally the implementation of the Programme and to reiterate our commitment to youth. The document is the most programmatic statement formulated by the United Nations since its establishment. It is a milestone in the process of world youth development and a symbol of the gradual internationalization of youth issues. We are now seeking to re-evaluate its

implementation, reiterate the international community's commitment, and reconfirm our determination. This meeting will have an important impact on youth development worldwide and international cooperation.

The past decade has been significant for China's reform, opening-up and modernization process. It has also been an important decade for the development process of Chinese youth. Over the past 10 years, the Chinese Government and leaders have paid tireless attention to youth issues. With respect to the 10 priorities identified in the World Programme of Action for Youth, the Government has established various cross-cutting organs on youth issues, including a State Council working committee on HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment and a leading group on the work of juvenile delinquency prevention. The Chinese legislative organs have amended the law on the protection of minors and promulgated a law on the prevention of juvenile delinquency to provide legal and institutional guarantees for youth development and the protection of young people's rights and interests. Furthermore, the sustained and rapid development of the Chinese economy and the Chinese Government's heavy investment in the areas of education, employment, health, culture and sports have provided Chinese youth development with better conditions than ever before, enormously raising the overall calibre of Chinese youth and enabling unprecedented youth participation.

With the support and encouragement of the Chinese Government, youth organizations at all levels, with the Communist Youth League of China and All-China Youth Federation at the core, have drawn together a vast group of young people and provided strong organizational support for their healthy development.

However, various problems, including intergenerational and other issues, have affected the development of young people. While those problems are specifically Chinese in nature, they also have global dimensions and universal features. In comparison to young people of previous generations, today's youth enjoy more diverse opportunities and face more complicated challenges. We would stress our work in the following three fields.

First, the Governments of the world should invest in youth with a long-term perspective and support the development of youth organizations and networks. Secondly, they should consider the influence of economic globalization on young people and its negative impact on marginalized youth so as to create opportunities for them to benefit from globalization. Thirdly, international cooperation should be stepped up. We are delighted that international cooperation in the field of youth development has been steadily increasing. China hopes that all Member States will jointly promote dialogue and cooperation on youth issues between developed countries and developing countries and the common development of world youth.

Young people represent not only the world of tomorrow, but also that of today. Let us join hands, cooperate together, and strive to build a harmonious world of lasting peace, common prosperity and an enabling environment for the growth and development of young people everywhere.

Ms. Khalil (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Ten years after its adoption, we meet today to evaluate the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, which identifies 10 vital priority areas to promote the welfare of youth. In our opinion, perhaps the most important of those areas is employment. Given the time constraints, I will focus on that one issue, the foundation of a cohesive social and economic structure based on improved prospects for a better way of life, including education, health care and consistently rising standards in those areas. It is also the foundation of economic progress and development and the best way to avert the involvement of youth in illegal activities, including extremism and terrorism.

If we are to speak objectively, we must start by stating that the creation of new opportunities for regular employment has become a challenge not only to national Governments, but also to the international community as a whole. It falls under the collective responsibility to ensure sustainable economic and social development and is key to solving such transnational problems as terrorism, discrimination against migrants, and associated cultural and social issues.

Mitigating the negative effects of globalization, as the Secretary-General notes in his report, can undoubtedly greatly enhance the potential for success in addressing youth problems. The ongoing exchanges among the nations of the world can be oriented towards

universal good governance and democracy, to the benefit of all. It is certain that the international market economy has huge productive potential; if wisely managed, it can promote unprecedented material progress and more productive employment and reduce poverty worldwide.

On the other hand, we are far from achieving all those ambitions. Globalization exacerbates the unequal distribution of resources throughout the world, and many countries and peoples do not share in its benefits. Worse yet, many of those countries and peoples lack the ability to make their voices heard in decision-making on international development. For the large majority of people, therefore, globalization has failed to fulfil their most basic hopes for better jobs.

The Egyptian Government pays close attention to the issue of unemployment in its efforts to achieve comprehensive social and economic development. It seeks adequate solutions to reducing unemployment, including the establishment of far-reaching programmes to provide employment opportunities, such as the Tushki project, the East Tofri'a project and the North-West Suez Bay project. It also encourages national and international investment.

Two pioneering projects for youth have also been set up in Egypt under a long-term strategy. The first is a national programme for productive families and professional development; launched in the 1960s, it seeks to transform low-income and the poorest families into productive entities working to meet the needs of traditional society, relying on interaction with the Government, civil society and a variety of public organizations so as to meet the national goal of realizing the aspirations of youth. The second is the social development fund established in 1991 as a model for distributing soft loans to address the negative effects of economic reform and the transition to free-market liberalization and privatization, which Egypt has begun in order to keep pace with globalization by creating new work opportunities and eliminating poverty, with special attention to such vulnerable groups as women and the disabled.

We must find new ways of making progress on youth issues, including more youth-oriented policies and special programmes on development. That can be done by using new and creative methods to implement what was agreed to in the World Programmes of Action for Youth.

Ms. Nuñez Mordoche (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, allow us to greet you, Sir, at this important plenary meeting of the General Assembly, at which we are considering, first and foremost, the future of mankind.

The World Programme of Action for Youth represented without doubt an important step in the promotion of the well-being of the younger generations. Much remains to be done. It is not our intention to emphasize statistics. Every analysis of the fulfilment of the development goals, as part of the follow-up to the outcome of important United Nations conferences and summits, clearly indicates delays in the implementation of the priority areas adopted 10 years ago, which are in need of a thorough relaunching within the framework of the implementation of the Programme.

In our country, programmes targeting Cuban youth generate a wide variety of alternatives for the social development of young people, guarantee their genuine inclusion as individuals in the process of transforming society, and create conditions to improve their quality of life. Young people, more than mere objects of social policy, play a leading role in its formulation and implementation and have a solid background in the essence of the political culture of participation and the democratic traditions of Cuban society.

Such purposes are achieved through a comprehensive approach to youth problems, to which various Government institutions are involved in finding solutions. Valuable information is received from social and demographic studies and priority is given to the commendable work of social organizations, especially youth organizations.

The results achieved by our country speak for themselves. Currently, for instance, the literacy rate of Cuban youth stands at 99.96 per cent, access to all levels of education is free and universal, and full employment has been reached following strenuous efforts to qualify and integrate young people who have had no access to education and jobs.

The time is long past when corrupt leaders plundered public funds and Government coffers and thousands of young people were unable to educate themselves and fell victim to rampant unemployment. However, some people want us to go back in time. Seven out of every 10 Cubans were born and have

lived in the hardship caused by the criminal economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States more than four decades ago. Nothing relating to the well-being of our youth escapes the consequences of the blockade.

Future generations need a world free of hunger and poverty, with health care, education and dignity for all — a world without oppression and discrimination, without war, genocidal blockades or the exploitation of the weakest. Such was the demand of thousands of people from throughout the world who met in Caracas, Venezuela, to celebrate the Sixteenth World Festival of Youth and Students. The letter and spirit of the Programme of Action for Youth will make sense only when the current insulting international order is eliminated.

Mr. Whitehouse (Australia): As Australia's youth representative, I am honoured by the opportunity to address the General Assembly today. But just to be a little bit different, I am not going to talk about the World Programme of Action for Youth. I am going to talk about Australian young people.

I have travelled the length and breadth of my country, chatting with young people and asking them what is important to young Australians. It is my humble privilege to bring the Assembly their voices.

I would like to share the voices of two groups of Australian young people. The first is in an Australian Aboriginal community called Warmun, nearly 1,000 kilometres from the closest large city. Here, a group of young boys are surrounded by dilapidated houses, dirt streets crammed with rubbish, and peers who have never seen the inside of a school. The second, in a very different setting, is a group of 400 young people crammed into the town hall of a large capital city, where they are surrounded by tall, multi-million dollar buildings and the latest technology. Yet, despite the disparate nature of those two groups, both overwhelmingly assert that the two biggest issues facing the world today are the crisis in Iraq and continuing poverty in our world. That, in the case of the young Aboriginal boys, is true despite their own extreme challenges.

Mr. Martirosyan (Armenia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Australia is a proudly multicultural country. While our indigenous peoples have called Australia home for more than 60,000 years, the evolving kaleidoscope of Australian life has seen many new faces become part of Australia in the last few years. The essence of Australian multiculturalism is that we do not all look the same and we do not all sound the same, but we are all Australian. It is our unity in our diversity that ties our dreams together.

While Australia's young people are diverse in colour, creed and geography, our voices reflect the unity that binds our country. In particular, we overwhelmingly communicate three basic needs: the need for a sense of community, the need for a sense of safety, and the need for a purpose.

Australia is overwhelmingly a country of community. Beyond the overarching community of being Australian, we have many smaller communities — rural towns, suburbs, schools, and even football clubs. I have found that, for Australian young people, the drive to be part of a community, whatever form that takes, supersedes all else. The need to find a place to belong is the most powerful force in shaping who we are.

Yet as I found, that drive for community often conflicts with the other great desires of Australian young people: the desires for safety and purpose. In various areas of Australia, young people told me of the unrelenting violence that exists in their homes. In rural Australia, young people told me of the lack of opportunities present in their communities. Youth unemployment is soaring, educational opportunities pale in comparison to those offered in metropolitan areas, and recreational facilities are often considerably underdeveloped.

However, in response to my queries as to why they would choose to stay in their community, all I received were baffled looks. This is their home, they told me; this is where their family and friends are; this is where they belong — this is their community. They could try to seek opportunities elsewhere, but would find the transition too difficult and return to their place of belonging. The draw of their communities was far too powerful.

If it is community that is so powerful for young people, the foremost role of our society must be to enable those young people, first, to remain in their communities, but more importantly, to be able to reach their full potential within a safe and purposeful existence.

One vital way to create communities that support and nurture young people is to include young people in the decision-making process. The Australian Government supports many programmes, such as youth advisory councils and the National Youth Roundtable, which offer young people a meaningful opportunity to dialogue with and advise those who make decisions on their behalf. Young Australians want not only to be kept informed of what decisions are being made on their behalf, but also to be involved in those decisions that affect their lives.

It is clear to me that, when given half a chance, young people have the most tremendous capacity to shape their own existence. Here are just three examples that I encountered. A few months ago, two teenagers organized a youth conference in rural Australia to enable other young Australians who live in the outback to meet and share opportunities. A young Australian in a seemingly depressed town in Northern Australia has recently created his community's first youth group in an attempt to offer his peers alternatives to unemployment and drugs. A group of Australian Aboriginal young women in the north of Western Australia have created a dancing group in an extremely isolated community, thus providing teenage girls with an opportunity to participate meaningfully in their community. Just by being themselves, they are being extraordinary.

As Australia's youth representative to the United Nations, I met countless young people who were captivated by the opportunity to have their voices heard at the United Nations. To be heard in the highest forum in the world is an opportunity without peer, especially for young people who may have never thought that their voices were valuable or worthy.

Youth representatives have the unique potential to bring voices from the ground to the highest decision-making body in the world. It is unique. It has the potential to change the United Nations from an abstract notion in young people's minds into a genuine entity in the souls of countless young people throughout the world. There is nothing more vital to the prosperity of the United Nations than a new generation of people believing that the United Nations is listening to them and acting on their behalf. I urge countries to consider including a youth representative in their delegations to the United Nations.

I thank members for this opportunity today. There are countless young Australians who feel valued merely because representatives listened to me here.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): The Tunisian delegation sets great store by the agenda item before us today, and takes this opportunity to express its appreciation for the quality of the reports produced on the issues under consideration. We also thank the Secretariat staff for their eloquent presentation of those contributions to our debate, and in particular for the "World Youth Report 2005", whose main conclusions and recommendations Tunisia embraces.

The 10-year review of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond coincides with the Assembly's recent consideration of the follow-up to the Millennium Declaration. We believe in the links between the World Programme of Action for Youth and the Millennium Development Goals, which constitute a new set of internationally agreed objectives to help youth and to integrate their needs into the broader framework of development programmes.

Most Member States have undeniably made some progress in certain priority areas of the World Programme of Action for Youth. Nevertheless, we endorse the Secretary-General's conclusion that "the current generation of young people is facing ever more complex challenges than the previous generation" (*A/60/61*, para. 93) and that it has become increasingly urgent to honour the commitment to find decent and productive employment for young people everywhere. The unemployment and underemployment of youth are no longer seen as merely social problems; they also have economic dimensions and, increasingly, political and security aspects as well. The creation of jobs helps to reduce the tensions that currently underpin numerous security and other social problems, including poverty, marginalization and extremism.

Moreover, several major transformations and events have taken place in the world since the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, and have had a direct impact on young people, who constitute 18 per cent of the world population today. People under 24 now make up almost half the world's population. The emergence of globalization, the increased use of information and communications technologies, access to such technologies, the spread of HIV/AIDS, the growing

involvement of youth in armed conflict, the resurgence of terrorism, and the vast numbers of young people living below the poverty line and suffering from malnutrition are just some of the changes in question. They clearly call for new responses to the needs of young people in education, the development of professional training, health care and employment, in an environment of increasing economic globalization and greater access to new information and communications technologies.

Special attention must be paid to the principle of a people-based approach and its embodiment in public and strategic development policies. Such an approach would contribute to attaining the international community's goals, the Millennium Development Goals in particular, and would require better mitigation of the social effects of globalization, the targeting of national and international macroeconomic policies towards social objectives, and support for the capacities of Governments to carry out their own social policies.

Tunisia is convinced that youth employment policies should not be confined to intervention in the labour market, but include social, educational and fiscal dimensions as well. Thus, young people enjoy the great concern of the Tunisian State, and measures have been taken to help them in the fields of education, culture, training, health care, leisure and so on. The State is striving to provide them with conditions for healthy development and a balanced education, ensure their integration into society, and promote their intellectual, scientific and artistic development. Significant investments have been earmarked for modernization and for ongoing and systematic re-evaluation of professional teaching programmes based not only on traditional trades, but also on the acquisition of new competences essential to better integration into the labour market.

With respect to employment, I note in particular the Tunisian national employment fund designed to integrate young people with scarce employment opportunities. We have also established a programme to create sources of revenue to help underprivileged families undertake family economic projects to improve their living conditions.

Despite all such efforts, we, like many developing countries, know that much remains to be done in order to honour all the national commitments that have been made to our youth. We are also determined to continue to work at the international level with a view to stepping up our mobilization to meet their needs and legitimate aspirations.

Mr. Wedershoven (Netherlands): It is with great honour and gratitude, but also with equally great concern, that I address the Assembly today.

(*spoke in French*)

> "Representatives and leaders of Europe, we appeal to your sense of solidarity and kindness to come to our rescue in Africa. Help us; we are suffering terribly."

(*spoke in English*)

That plea is from a letter written six years ago by two boys from Guinea, Yaguine Koita and Fodé Tounkara. It was found with their dead bodies in the landing gear of a plane en route to Europe on 2 August 1999. The boys had embarked on a dangerous journey in an attempt to flee from danger in the hope of a brighter future. Risking their lives seemed a better option to them than staying home. I find their courage and despair as moving today as I did when I myself was a young boy growing up in the safety of the Netherlands.

The world today offers hardly more opportunities to young people than it did to Yaguine and Fodé. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees informs us that more than 20 million young people are fleeing from the same danger: the lack of prospects. Their despair becomes easier to understand when we realize that almost 90 million young people are unemployed and make up more than half the world's unemployed. Imagine the obstacles 500 million young people entering the workforce over the next 10 years — young people with little opportunity to earn a living — will face. Those sobering statistics, together with Yaguine and Fodé's cry for help, compel me to draw the Assembly's attention to the problem of youth unemployment.

Denying young people their rights — such as the right to decent work or the right to seek and express their sexual or cultural identity — places our future at risk. This is a question of human dignity and world security. Increasing employment opportunities for young people not only addresses the primary concern of young people throughout the world, but also contributes to more sustainable, equal development.

Millennium Development Goal 8 seeks to develop and implement strategies designed to create decent and productive work for young people and is one of the quick wins for achieving the Goals. Youth employment is also a priority area in the World Programme of Action for Youth.

We are not asking that members sign new agreements or declare new intentions, but we need them to act.

Governments alone cannot do the job, but must cooperate with micro-financing institutions, entrepreneurs, civil society and, last but definitely not least, young people themselves. Research by the International Labour Organization indicates that young entrepreneurs have a significantly higher than average success rate and a positive track record in paying off microcredit loans. The United Nations proclaimed 2005 the International Year of Microcredit. Young people should be a target group for microfinance projects and institutions.

Several initiatives inspired me this year, such as the Youth Employment Spark project — a youth-led network for young entrepreneurs that helps young people to learn from one other and inspire others to take positive action. Such examples are proof that the Millennium Development Goals are within reach and that young people themselves, if given the chance, have a great deal to contribute.

I would like to underline the importance of having more youth representatives at this session of the General Assembly than ever before. Not only are we experts on issues concerning youth; we are the best placed to explain decisions taken and to bring positive messages to our peers at home. I would like to thank the Member States that give young people opportunities for meaningful participation, and I urge Member States to include youth representatives in all relevant discussions of the General Assembly and other forums.

Young people call on Member States to promote initiatives to increase universal access to financial services, including microcredit, and support networks for young entrepreneurs; learn from and support important global initiatives, such as the Youth Employment Network and the Youth Employment Summit; and translate and implement United Nations resolutions, such as the World Programme of Action for Youth, into national action plans.

(*spoke in French*)

> "So you see, if we sacrifice or risk our lives, it is because we in Africa have suffered too long and need your help."

(*spoke in English*)

I can only hope that I have contributed to ensuring that Yaguine and Fodé did not die in vain. Can we act as an international community, hold ourselves accountable for the many great promises and resolutions made here, restore our faith in this institution and have hope for a better future? Yes, we can. We, the young people, stand ready to do so.

Ms. Ahmed (Bangladesh): I speak on behalf of my Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Mr. Iftekhar Chowdhury.

Youth are the catalyst for change and development. The spirit of youth can and must be converted into a tool for change and progress. The participation of youth representatives in this debate has given us the opportunity to hear them and listen to their experience at first hand.

Bangladesh remains fully committed to the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. We pay due attention to all matters concerning youth, particularly the unemployed segment of our young population. We emphasize the 10 priority areas identified by the World Programme of Action for Youth and the five additional issues of concern acknowledged in General Assembly resolution 58/133 of 2003. We attach necessary attention to the proper education, employment creation, health care facilities, skill development and various vocational trainings, entrepreneurship and awareness programmes for our youth. Special emphasis has also been placed on promoting and ensuring the active participation of girls and young women.

Bangladesh adopted a national youth policy in 2003. It defines the population in the age group from 18 to 35 as youth. As per that definition, we have roughly 45 million youth. The Ministry of Youth and Sports has a department devoted solely to youth development. Our aim is to transform our young population into an organized, disciplined and productive workforce. The Department of Youth Development coordinates various programmes. While implementing those programmes, the Government

maintains close collaboration with the non-governmental organizations.

Bangladesh has taken numerous positive steps to mainstream its young population. First, we have improvised a set of skill development programmes that include computer and information technologies, electronics, garments, agriculture, secretarial sciences, and so on.

Secondly, we have developed self-employment programmes, including motivation training, group formation, credit and input support, close supervision and development of marketing networks, and so on.

Thirdly, the Government has introduced an initiative called "Family-Based Employment Programme" which provides microcredits to youth towards the establishment microenterprises. Under the programme, young people are also being trained in small-family norms, malnutrition, sanitation, tree planting, and so on. More than 65,000 young people have been given loans from the Credit Fund and the realization of loans is nearly 89 per cent.

Fourthly, we have projects to involve young people in such activities as population control, the prevention of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, reproductive health care and safe motherhood. The United Nations Population Fund is providing assistance in those projects.

Last but not least, various local youth clubs, supported by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, play a very significant role in community development, raising awareness and various self-employment schemes.

South Asia has the largest number of youth living below the two poverty lines, followed by sub-Saharan Africa. In order to make progress in the world youth situation, we need to take account of the needs of South Asian youth, which includes about 9.9 million young people in my country. My delegation acknowledges that mainstreaming youth in the process of poverty eradication is a complex challenge that requires our continuous attention and action.

It is easy sometimes to overlook our youth, but we do so at our great peril. Societies that are able to tap the potential of youth are better adjusted to achieving progress, development and, indeed, prosperity. None of us can begrudge attention to youth, for however distant and remote it may seem, all present are either young now or were young once.

Mr. Ronnholm (Finland): As a youth representative from Finland, it is an honour for me to address this Assembly.

We are here to review the situation of youth and achievements attained in the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth 10 years after its adoption. I am delighted to see more youth representatives here at the United Nations highest decision-making body than ever before. However, more than 100 Member States still have not provided the voices of their youth the opportunity to be heard at this forum, in spite of the fact that the General Assembly has adopted numerous resolutions calling for the inclusion of youth representatives in Member States' delegations. True representation, however, can be achieved only when democratically chosen bodies representing different youth interests, such as national youth councils, conduct the selection of youth representatives.

General Assembly resolutions also recommend that young people be directly involved in decision-making processes. Youth-led development should be promoted at all levels. Young people should take responsibility for developing their own societies.

The World Programme of Action for Youth provides a very good basis for any country to develop a national youth policy. However, there is a need to strengthen the authority of the document. General awareness of the World Programme needs to be greatly increased. Youth organizations need to be involved in the implementation and monitoring of the Programme. There is also a need to find accurate indicators for monitoring the impact of the Programme. One solution is to choose indicators applied in the compiling of the *Human Development Index* that are suitable for youth issues and use them in analysing data for monitoring. The monitoring could be delegated to national youth councils — with the appropriate funding — to provide an adequate overall picture of the situation of young people in the State in question.

As a youth representative, I strongly recommend that a special United Nations taskforce be established to coordinate the implementation and monitoring of the World Programme of Action in order to make reporting official and efficient. The Programme should also be seen as a tool for reaching the Millennium

Development Goals. Although the Programme is not a legally binding document in itself, many of the important issues addressed therein — such as the right to health and employment issues — are already included in existing, legally binding international instruments.

It is time for us all to act. We all know what to do, so now let us please do it. While celebrating its tenth anniversary, the World Programme of Action for Youth is getting rid of its "paediatric" problems. It is becoming a strong and independent teenager who has hopefully found its place in the United Nations family. And as a demanding teenager, questioning the status quo and demanding change, it should continue to do so in the future.

The Acting President: I should like to inform the General Assembly that the representatives of Ghana, Qatar and Saudi Arabia have requested to participate in this meeting. Inasmuch as the list of speakers was closed at 11 a.m. this morning, may I ask the General Assembly whether there is any objection to including those delegations in the list of speakers?

As I hear none, Ghana, Qatar and Saudi Arabia are included in the list of speakers.

U Win Mra (Myanmar): As we gather here today to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, I wish first of all to thank Mr. Eliasson for the efforts he has made in the preparations for holding this important event. I wish also to express our gratitude to the Secretariat for the crucial role it has played.

The World Programme of Action for Youth, adopted in 1995, focused on 10 priority areas. Although there have been many economic and social changes in the global environment in the past decade, we strongly believe that those 10 priority areas continue to be very relevant today and will remain relevant in the future. My delegation is of the view that the global community should concentrate more on achieving the existing goals which we set for ourselves in 1995. Additional challenges faced by today's youth could be streamlined into the existing 10 priority areas, since they are interconnected.

Poverty lies at the centre of the 10 priority areas. Quality education, quality health care, decent employment, leisure for youth, and other goals cannot be fully realized if poverty prevails in a society. The Secretary-General reports that 85 per cent of the world's youth live in the developing world and that 208.6 million youth in the world today exist on less than $1 a day, while 515.1 million live on less than $2 a day. Given such a scenario, we are of the view that the focus should remain on poverty alleviation. We join the call of the Secretary-General, who suggests the need for quantitative and qualitative research on poverty alleviation among youth. The idea put forward by many youth organizations — to support the development of a global youth development index — also deserves merit and consideration.

We strongly believe that education is the primary solution to poverty alleviation. By investing in the youth of today, we can build a better tomorrow. The Secretary-General reports that secondary school gross enrolments on a global level increased from 56 to 78 per cent in the last decade and that tertiary enrolment rates increased worldwide from 69 million in 1990 to 88 million in 1997. However, despite such increases, the Secretary-General reports that the gap between male and female literacy rates in Asia and Africa appears to be widening. We call for additional international efforts to better educate girls and women.

Modern concepts of learning, such as distance education and "e-learning", have opened up a new dimension of learning to better ensure that no child or youth is left out. At the same time, the widening digital divide between developed and developing countries must not be overlooked. In Myanmar, through strong commitment and concerted efforts, the literacy rate for youth aged 15 to 24 years increased from 80.9 per cent in 1990 to 96.5 per cent in 2004.

The Secretary-General has reported that, while the number of youth in secondary and tertiary education has increased, labour markets in many countries are not able to accommodate those large groups of skilled graduates.

We are of the view that enhanced market access, sustainably financed technical assistance and capacity-building programmes for developing countries would help create jobs. Outsourcing to developing countries is also a viable solution for the creation of jobs without causing a brain drain.

Youth participation in civil society activities is beneficial in many ways. It fosters intergenerational relations, prevents displacement of traditional

activities, limits the chances of engagement in risky behaviour, promotes volunteer activities and gives young people the chance to build networks among themselves. In Myanmar, the youth wing of the Union Solidarity and Development Association, plays a crucial role in the lives of Myanmar youth today. The Association holds various courses for human resource development at all levels, encourages volunteerism, enhances youth engagement and provides forums for intergenerational discussions.

The World Youth Report draws our attention to the fact that drugs, tobacco and alcohol are means of escaping situations that youth often feel powerless to change, and it identifies tobacco use as one of the chief preventable causes of death in the world today. Aggressive advertising and marketing of alcohol and tobacco has resulted in growing alcohol and drug abuse among the targeted audience: youth. Myanmar became a party to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in October 2003, and it has imposed restrictions on tobacco advertising and marketing. Information on the hazards of tobacco is included in the school curriculum, and many schools have been declared tobacco-free.

The youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow. I conclude by reaffirming my Government's commitment to the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond and to building a peaceful, just and stable environment for our youth.

Ms. Uwonkunda (Norway): Please allow me to start my statement by bringing a message from a girl who was not given the opportunity to be here, but who has an important message.

> "I still get bad dreams and wake up screaming. Even when I am not asleep, I get bad dreams. I hear rebels threatening to kill me. I see a long line of frightened children tied with ropes and hear rebels ordering to kill them. At night, I do not want to see flashes of torches. They remind me of the night I was abducted."

Those are the words of 13-year-old Pamela from northern Uganda, and that is the reality of thousands of children.

I was the same age as 13-year-old Pamela when I myself faced the greatest tragedy of my life as a young refugee from Rwanda. But despite our sharing the same destiny, her tragedy is far greater than mine.

As a young refugee of 13 due to war in Rwanda, I was forced to grow up unbelievably fast. I did not have a choice, and neither did any of the others with whom I spent the first three nights in a roundabout in Goma in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

It was not until December 1997 that I could finally sit and relax, that I could finally sleep and wake up without nightmares. For the first time in a long time, I saw my parents at ease, with no worry for our security or about how to put food on the table. Not everyone got the same chance my family did.

Norway fully supports the World Youth Report's demand for special attention to integrating youth who are victims of armed conflicts. But it is important that the need for special attention be recognized in the countries of origin as well as in the countries of asylum. The World Youth Report describes the relationship between a refugee's situation and the probability of poverty, drug abuse, trafficking, violence, dropping out of school and exposure to physical suffering and psychological damage.

Children and youth who flee and seek asylum in safe countries have special needs. The Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children who seek asylum must receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance. When unaccompanied minors arrive in host countries, they are often treated the same way as adults. But they need special treatment, adapted information and the appointment of a guardian to be responsible for providing help and assistance.

Receiving young refugees is not just a burden. Refugee children have ideas, experiences, knowledge and an abundance of resources. The asylum State must succeed in integrating young refugees to be able to take advantage of the resources of those children and young people. We simply cannot afford to lose them or see them drop out. In fact, if States fail to integrate asylum-seekers and refugees, they risk creating a new lower class. Young people and youth non-governmental organizations should be seen as tools and partners in integration processes.

We urge the States that have not done so to ratify and comply with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We urge all States to incorporate the Convention on the Rights of the Child into national law and to comply with its obligations. We urge all States to see young refugees as valuable resources and to develop integration programmes for young refugees. We urge

the United Nations to focus on the situation of young refugees and internally displaced persons in the next World Youth Report on youth at risk.

My own story ended very well, but Pamela did not get the second chance I got. For her and millions of other children and young people, we have to work together to find a solution. That requires time and resources that I know we possess. Let us make it a priority.

Mr. Kutlualp (Turkey): It is indeed an honour and a privilege for me to address the General Assembly in my capacity as youth delegate from Turkey at this meeting on the evaluation of the progress made in the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

This special occasion not only enables young people from numerous Member States to make their voices heard but also creates an opportunity for Governments to recognize and fully realize the potential of youth, especially in matters of direct concern to young people.

Beyond doubt, the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond has served as a key document in the formulation of policy on issues regarding youth. Certain progress has been achieved in priority areas defined by the World Programme of Action. However, serious challenges remain.

We believe that the key to success in achieving the goals defined by the Programme of Action is the involvement of youth, both in decision-making and implementation processes. Assigning certain responsibilities will help young people play a more significant role in society as active partners. Cooperation and collaboration between Governments and civil society organizations are also crucial for success.

Turkey has achieved important progress in areas of policy priority addressed in the World Programme of Action. Education, health, environment and, especially, girls and young women are some of the areas in which promising progress has been made. The success achieved in raising awareness of gender issues and the sustained efforts for increasing the schooling rate of girls deserve particular attention.

The activities of civil society on youth issues in Turkey are also commendable. Among those activities, the establishment in 2004 of the Local Agenda 21 Youth Parliament should be underlined. That event, which coincided with the official Youth Day of Turkey, 19 May, brought together 297 youth delegates from all over the country.

We see the World Programme of Action as a living document. Therefore, we welcome the inclusion of the five additional priority areas, namely, the mixed impact of globalization on young women and men; the use of and access to information and communication technologies; the dramatic increase of HIV infections among young people and the impact of the epidemic on their lives; the involvement of young people in armed conflict, both as victims and as perpetrators; and the increased importance of addressing intergenerational issues in an ageing society. It is with this understanding that we have joined in sponsoring draft resolution A/60/L.2, on policies and programmes involving youth.

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to express my sincere hope that the number of occasions providing youth delegates with the opportunity to participate in the work of the United Nations will continuously increase. We believe that the participation of young delegates not only enriches the debate and the policy dialogue, but also strengthens existing channels of communication and cooperation among Governments and, most important, young people.

Mr. Blake (Jamaica): My delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his lucid and candid World Youth Report 2005 (*A/60/61*). We also wish to extend our congratulations to the President and the other members of the Bureau on your election.

Since the genesis of the World Programme of Action for Youth in 1995, little progress has been realized in the 10 major areas outlined as priority areas. My delegation concurs with the findings of World Youth Report 2005, which posits that one of the pitfalls in the implementation of the Programme of Action was that a formal mechanism for quantifying progress or regress was not implemented. We are challenging the United Nations to develop an index and, further, to establish a committee with a special portfolio to conduct continuous evaluation.

The World Programme of Action for Youth has failed to adequately address the core issues related to intergenerational relations because, irrespective of the changed and still changing structure, the family remains the primary social institution, as pointed out by the World Youth Report. Youth development must

be viewed in the context of benefits to current and future generations. Caribbean Governments have found it difficult to keep the family in place as the basic building block of Caribbean cosmopolitan society, and recent studies on the regional situation have noted that many of the problems facing young people can be attributed, among other things, to a combination of three crucial shortcomings: failure to recognize the importance of the nuclear family, failure to maintain monogamous relations and the failure of males to remain on par with females in the areas of education and employment.

One of the criticisms levelled against the World Programme of Action by the World Youth Report is that policymakers have failed to adequately address youth participation and to support sustained youth involvement, resulting in a failure to incorporate the ideas and perspectives of young people. In my own country, Jamaica, in accordance with the mandates of the 1994 National Youth Policy, a National Centre for Youth Development has been established as an official agency with responsibility for policy formulation, strategic planning, research, monitoring and evaluation. The significant feature of this agency is that it is led and completely staffed by fully qualified young professionals. In addition, as our Government seeks to transform our educational system to ensure that Jamaica achieves the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) related to education, the participation of youth has been a critical feature of the task force on education charged with providing recommendations and the committee with responsibility for monitoring and evaluating implementation.

My delegation therefore strongly recommends that the United Nations seek as a matter of urgency to institutionalize the participation and involvement of youth through the establishment and full support of permanent youth representatives to the United Nations for every nation as part of a United Nations youth ambassadors programme. The work of the United Nations is a process, and hence meaningful youth participation cannot be achieved by the invitation to nations to send youth delegates to attend one-off meetings of the General Assembly. Additionally, if the participation of youth is to amount to more than mere tokenism, officials at the highest levels of the United Nations must engage youth delegates in meaningful dialogue. Thus, we further recommend that United Nations establish a special committee comprising the proposed permanent youth representatives. Further, the Organization should hold true to the principle of co-management and move at full speed to appoint and support a shadow youth secretary-general, who would work on a full-time basis with the Secretary-General and be charged with ensuring that the priorities of the World Programme of Action for Youth are indeed addressed.

According to the Prime Minister of Jamaica, The Most Honourable Percival James Patterson, "it is not that we embrace globalization, but it is globalization which embraces us". Consequently, in any meaningful evaluation of the World Programme of Action, the dynamics of globalization and its impact on youth development must be taken into account. As many developing countries struggle to achieve economic growth within the new globalized economy, many of the resources that would normally be invested in youth development programmes are being diverted to service debt repayments.

Globalization is the single largest factor which has the potential to redistribute resources away from the poor to the rich. Such an argument ought not to be obfuscated with emotionalism, but should be viewed against the startling reality that young people constitute about 18 per cent of the approximately 2 billion people or approximately 33 per cent of the world's population who live in countries that do not benefit from the so-called merits of globalization. Most of these youths are to be found in parts of sub-Saharan Africa, Western Asia and the former Soviet Union.

Finally, speaking within the context of developing countries, we wish to emphasize the alarming reality of youth unemployment. There are over 88 million youth unemployed worldwide and millions more who are underemployed. Globalization has caused drastic shifts in the job market, and technological innovation has changed the scope of the market. This is significant, considering the nature of emerging economies. We acknowledge that job markets have improved in a very small number of developing countries such as China and India. However, in the vast majority of developing States the job market has contracted due to, inter alia: a reduction in Government employment as a result of tight fiscal policies brought about in order to protect the value of national currency against international speculation, reduction in private sector employment in response to competition from cheaper imports and difficulty of entry and competition

in export markets. This contraction of the job market has had a greater impact on youth than on adults.

As one positive response to addressing youth unemployment at home, we are pleased to be one of the latest countries to join the Youth Employment Network as a lead country. We look forward to engaging in exchanges with other countries in this important mechanism. We therefore call for fairer rules to govern international business and trade, in particular measures to cushion the impacts of adverse changes.

It is now 2005. Where are we now? In what direction are our faces turned? It is time for action. We all know what to do. Please let us do it.

In the race towards the finish line to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, let us remember that a young man from Jamaica has shown the world that you can finish a 100-metre sprint in 9.77 seconds. Let us sprint towards the achievement of the Millennium Goals, and not jog as though it were a marathon.

Ms. Vegas Guerrero (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for me to represent Peru and to transmit our warm greetings as we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth.

We must briefly ask ourselves, as we have done in Peru, whether we have much to celebrate. To be sure, we in Peru have been making considerable effort to include youth in public policy that concerns them. For us, this means reviewing and realizing that poverty indicators have not decreased and that 52 per cent of the 7.5 million young people in Peru live in poverty. It is also true that indicators concerning early adolescent pregnancy and first-time maternal mortality among adolescent and young women have not yet decreased. But we must point out here that there is a similar situation in many developing countries. It is also important to stress that what we are doing in Peru to integrate young people into society, and not only by promoting their participation. Many approaches involve only the participation of youth, merely by inviting them to activities and then listening to them.

The Government of Peru has a clear commitment to involve young people as strategic stakeholders in development. We have a youth commission in the national Congress, the legislative power in Peru. It was established just four years ago, and is discovering how to go about its work — through regulations and legislation to ensure the development and inclusion of young people. In the executive branch there is a ministerial-level National Youth Commission. It does not compete with other ministries, but ensures that specific ministries — for example, the ministries for education, labour, health, social development, economy and finance — include a youth dimension in their own development policies in the context of national, regional and local government.

Likewise, regional and local governments are providing opportunities for dialogue between the Government and young people and their organizations. In Peru, youth are reluctant to participate in politics, because they are disillusioned, as is often the case in other countries, about political involvement and about politicians.

At the same time, we have a large number of young people who are participating in elections. In fact, 32 per cent of our population between 18 and 29 years of age participates in elections and will elect future Governments. They have important political decisions to make. I would also like to say that institutions in Peru are actively trying to incorporate youth in Government policies. We want youth issues to be part not just of current Government policy but of national policy.

At the international level, Peru is making a strong commitment through the Ibero-American Youth Organization, the only organization that brings together national youth ministries and agencies in Latin America. Peru currently has the challenge and honour of presiding over that organization.

I would like to mention the Ibero-American Convention on the Rights of Youth, which we shall sign at Badajoz, Spain, on 10 October 2005. There, 21 Ibero-American countries will meet to sign the first international instrument for the rights of young people — which we bring to the attention of all countries. It seeks to ensure that policies of signatory Governments will promote genuine inclusion of young people.

It is important to speak of youth seriously, not using cheap politics or welfare policies. We need to make sure that youth organizations are truly seen as stakeholders in the development of our countries — but not only by inviting them and by asking them to join us. We want youth to be included in our countries' policies. We need young people to believe in

participating, as leaders, in our countries' politics. They are future presidents and future regional and local leaders.

I call upon everyone to continue believing in young people not only as the future of our countries but also as their present. Youth represent not only future political leaders; they are our immediate future and our hope for sustainable development and, of course, for the elimination of the poverty that afflicts many of our countries.

My thanks and congratulations go to the youth delegates who are here to represent so many of the world's countries.

Mr. Hajiyev (Azerbaijan): As a youth delegate from Azerbaijan at the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, it is a great honour for me to be here and to address the Assembly today on the occasion of the 10-year review of the World Programme of Action for Youth.

Since adoption of that Programme in 1995, our world has changed significantly. The time therefore has come to rethink the old agenda and to start looking upon things in a bold new way. Poverty represents serious threat to the security and well-being of young generations. It deprives young people of education and employment and often makes them victims of human trafficking, exploitation and abuse. To a large extent, only low paid and insecure jobs with limited possibilities for advancement are available to the young generations.

Young people, with their enormous untapped potential, can make their own important contribution to poverty reduction. Rather than being viewed as a target group for which employment must be found, young people want to be accepted as partners for development. According to statistical data, only a small percentage of youth across the globe is able to find the necessary funding to start up their own businesses and to involve themselves and other young men and women in entrepreneurship. However, if Governments employ specific programmes to promote youth employment and entrepreneurship at the national level, we will succeed in significantly reducing youth unemployment. Furthermore, national youth-led business funds could be established in order to provide necessary assistance to young entrepreneurs.

I am pleased to represent here one of the leading countries of the Youth Employment Network, a major international initiative to address the challenge of youth employment globally. Azerbaijan, as one of the first countries to join the Network, has recently adopted a youth policy in the form of the State Programme for Youth 2005-2009, which views the promotion of youth employment and youth entrepreneurship among its key policy directions. The programme envisages adoption of a national action plan on youth employment by 2006 and preparation of measures to promote youth entrepreneurship in remote areas and to improve the training and education of young people in this area.

I am also happy to note the achievements of other leading countries of the Network, such as Brazil, Indonesia, Namibia, Senegal and others, which have also undertaken measures to promote youth employment in their respective countries, including the adoption of national action plans. As a youth representative, I fully support these actions and hope that all Member States can learn from the results achieved so far by the Youth Employment Network, and especially from best practices provided by lead countries.

Another formidable challenge the young people of Azerbaijan continue to face is the ongoing armed conflict with Armenia, which has a detrimental impact on youth and significantly limits prospects for their full-scale development. As a result of this conflict, generations of young Azerbaijani women and men have grown up in refugee and internally displaced persons camps. We, as youth representatives of Azerbaijan, believe that the young generations of both countries can contribute tremendously to the solution of the conflict; this is vital for the security and development of our region. We hope that the Armenian side will demonstrate the same constructive approach towards that end.

We are grateful that, in both the Millennium Declaration and the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting (*resolution 60/1*), youth concerns have been taken into account to a certain extent. However, this is not enough. Around the world, the contributions that young people are already making to achieving the Millennium Development Goals should be further acknowledged and strengthened. Youth needs to be part of the discussion and decisions shaping our world for our common future. It is

therefore crucial to involve them in the design and implementation of various development programmes and policies, in particular those targeting young people.

In conclusion, I wish to thank Azerbaijan and the United Nations for providing me with the opportunity to speak here today. I hope that more and more younger people, from all countries, especially those from developing countries and countries in transition, will be able to participate in future sessions of the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies and will eventually become real and active partners of Governments in realizing the global goals and commitments before us.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

United Nations A/60/PV.28

General Assembly
Sixtieth session

Official Records

28th plenary meeting
Thursday, 6 October 2005, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 62 (*continued*)

Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

Two plenary meetings devoted to the evaluation of the progress made in the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/60/61, A/60/133 and Corr.1, and A/60/156)

Draft resolution (A/60/L.2)

Ms. Mouro (Portugal) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Portuguese Government, I have been designated to represent Portuguese youth during this special meeting of the General Assembly devoted to youth.

I wish to associate myself with the statement made by the youth representative of the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union.

In recent years much work has been done to reaffirm youth policies, particularly as concerns the objectives set out in the World Programme of Action for Youth, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). As citizens of the world, we want to express our ideas and feelings and to create the necessary conditions for the participation of young people in society.

We believe that we need more than just recognition. Young people represent an important social group and should enjoy the right to participate and state their views on all aspects of society relevant to them. It is not enough to have a youth policy. Young people must to be involved in the formulation and implementation of the policies that affect them, including through credible, accountable, autonomous and independent youth organizations.

The promotion of the protection of, and respect for, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all young people form the basis of our national youth policy. It is of utmost importance that human rights be implemented and safeguarded in order to improve young people's lives as well as ensure their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

With regard to the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth, the Portuguese Government, together with the National Youth Council, has developed developing a series of activities and projects aimed at the Programme's implementation. We held a seminar on "Young people and sexuality", whose conclusions reiterated the importance and urgency of campaigns to inform young people about sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, as well as unplanned pregnancy.

We have recently relaunched our "Different but equal" campaign, which addresses the problems of

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

05-53913 (E)

xenophobia, racism and cultural and gender discrimination.

Sustainable development is also a key issue for us. We have published a book on the topic that has been distributed in schools throughout the country and has been made available to all youth institutions. That book will serve as a tool to raise the awareness of, and sensitize Portuguese youth to, that issue.

The Portuguese youth policy takes a cross-sectoral approach and encompasses important areas affecting young peoples' lives. In recent years, the Portuguese Government, in close cooperation with the National Youth Council, supported the holding of significant international youth meetings, particularly the World Youth Festival; the first World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, which issued the Lisbon Declaration; the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries Youth Conference; and the most recent consultative meeting on the 10-year review of the World Programme of Action for Youth, held at Coimbra last January, which issued a number of recommendations on the Programme of Action.

During the Coimbra meeting, we had the opportunity, for the first time, to engage in a genuine exchange of views between United Nations agencies and youth organizations on the implementation of the Programme.

At the international level, our National Youth Council has been cooperating with the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries on two objectives. The first relates to the mobility of young Portuguese speakers, and the second is a project aimed at informing, warning and educating young people about HIV/AIDS.

We have done a great deal over the past 10 years to promote and implement the World Programme of Action, but much more must be done. We will continue to do our share to achieve the goals that are our common responsibility.

The participation of young people in decision-making processes is one of the key priority areas of the United Nations agenda on youth. We therefore urge national Governments to continue to include youth representatives in their national delegations to important international events, including sessions of the General Assembly and of the Commission for Social Development.

Youth representatives can take home to their respective countries knowledge that can then be transmitted to other young people, thereby creating an opportunity to motivate increasing numbers of young people to become involved in the shaping of their future.

Youth representatives can also make significant inputs to discussions held in the context of various institutions. We will continue our work and remain committed to working with international institutions. We are cooperating with, among others, the European Youth Forum.

We reaffirm the commitments we have undertaken in the context of the World Programme of Action for Youth and its five priorities. We remain committed to the Millennium Development Goals, and we ask the United Nations to assist Member States and youth organizations in the implementation of a comprehensive, cross-sectoral youth policy capable of reaching young people everywhere.

Young people must be considered part of the solution, and not a problem.

The President: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I should like to inform members that there are a large number of speakers on our list for this meeting. In order to accommodate all the speakers, and taking into account that we must allow time for the consideration of draft resolution A/60/L.2, and for the exercise of the right of reply, I strongly urge speakers to limit their statements to four minutes.

Ms. Taracena Secaira (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like at the outset to reiterate what was expressed by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Rio Group, who explained the situation of young people in the region. To evaluate the situation of the world's young people is to evaluate the future of the world. It is to analyse where we are and where we want to go, because today's young people represent the future of humanity and of the world.

If, as stated in the report of the Secretary-General (*A/60/61*), young people represent 18 per cent of the world's population and 85 per cent of them live in developing countries, the future is in our hands. That is a great responsibility not only for our own countries, but for everyone. It is a challenge that is not only national, but global.

Guatemala has understood that very well. That is why, two years ago, we launched the national youth policy, aimed at the comprehensive and sustainable development of the Guatemalan young people participating in it. Although young people represent 70 per cent of my country's current population, they did not have access to comprehensive strategies or programmes until now.

This is the first national youth policy that has been established in Guatemala. We are proud to have developed it with broad participation by representatives of my country's diverse ethnic and linguistic groups and with the assistance of an interagency coordination effort. Participating in its creation were 10 ministries; three State secretariats; the Supreme Court of Justice; 48 youth representatives of the linguistic communities of the Mayan, Garifuna and Xinca peoples, as proposed by the Mayan Language Academy of Guatemala; the Council of the Xinca People and the Organization of Black Guatemalans; 12 youth representatives of the political parties; and 311 civil society organizations active in areas pertaining to youth — all of them under the coordination of the National Youth Council of Guatemala.

Through the policy, we seek to implement the principles of solidarity and inclusion of President Oscar Berger Perdomo's governmental plan for 2004-2008 — whose agenda accords priority to young people and to the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond — and to assist in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. We are aware that we can achieve the Goals only if all sectors of society are involved.

The policy's purpose is to direct the efforts of the State towards improving young people's quality of life, promoting their comprehensive development and broadening their opportunities to build unity in diversity and to become good citizens. We need young people to take responsibility for facilitating and making the transition from lacking access to opportunities to fully exercising their rights and citizenship.

The national youth policy is based on four principles: the principle of human rights, in which young people are seen as having individual and collective civil, political, cultural, economic and social rights; the principle of multiculturalism, which recognizes the diversity of the peoples and cultures that together form one nation and that build unity out of diversity, knowledge, understanding and mutual respect among the various cultures and civilizations that are a basic characteristic of my country; the principle of sustainability, which sets out basic guidelines for sustainable development, as they relate to economic organization, the relationship with the natural environment, social and political organization and cultural aspects; and the principle of intergenerational cooperation, which fosters relations of solidarity, cooperation and mutual respect among various age groups, recognizing that each group has important values to share with and teach to other generations.

The national youth policy focuses on six areas: gender, the life cycle, comprehensiveness and inclusion, the family, the multisectoral approach and territoriality. It also has 11 components, including citizen participation, multiculturalism, community security and justice, scientific and technological education and development, integral and differentiated health care, employment and work, and starting a business and competitiveness.

We are pleased that the draft resolution on which we will take a decision at this meeting will emphasize the importance of employment and work. Our young people need decent work that will remove them from the risks and dangers of idleness, which include frustration, vagrancy, drug abuse, HIV/AIDS infection, gang membership, violence and delinquency.

I cannot fail to emphasize that during the process of elaborating Guatemala's national youth policy, a gender perspective was incorporated as a norm for participation, requiring equal numbers of women and men from all participating organizations. Guatemalan young people thus provided us with a valuable lesson that should be taken into account by the rest of society. Nor can I fail to mention the national and international cooperative entities that took part in this process, including the Guatemalan Indigenous Development Fund, the United Nations Population Fund, UNICEF, the German Agency for Technical Cooperation and the Iberoamerican Youth Organization. Many thanks go to all of them.

Finally, I must tell the Assembly how much I regret having been the one to make this statement in this Hall, because my Government would have preferred that a representative of Guatemalan youth

could have come. But the problem was a lack of resources, not a lack of willingness. That is why we support the initiative to create a United Nations youth fund that would facilitate economic assistance for youth representatives of developing countries and give them the opportunity to participate in all United Nations forums directly concerning them. However, I am very proud to have been able to share with members what young people are doing in Guatemala.

The President: I note the representative's plea for facilities to make it possible for young people to attend functions of this nature.

Mr. Chaimongkol (Thailand): At the outset, my delegation would like to extend a very warm welcome to all the youth representatives, whose young faces remind us of the very purpose of our gathering here today. In fact, the General Assembly can benefit greatly by listening to them, as our young partners in working for the future.

The world we live in today is very different from that of 1995 when the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond was adopted. Therefore, it is timely for us all to take stock of that instrument's implementation during the past decade and to assess its actual impact on the lives of young persons, who make up approximately one fifth of the world's population. The occasion also provides us with an opportunity to highlight new challenges that many young people around the world are facing — often in silence or with their voices unheard.

My delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's World Youth Report 2005 (*A/60/61*), and his report on the global analysis and evaluation of national action plans on youth employment (*A/60/133*). Both of those reports are comprehensive and can serve as suitable starting points for further discussions on the situation of youth today. In addition, my delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's report, "Making commitments matter: young people's input to the 10-year review of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond" (*A/60/156*), as well as the informal interactive round table organized on that theme — "Young People: Making Commitments Matter" — held on 5 October, both of which provide us with useful youth perspectives on various issues of direct concern to young people themselves.

Although it is evident that progress on youth development has been made on many fronts, many challenges still remain. On the economic front, it was reported that 515 million young people — or nearly 45 per cent of youth worldwide — live on less than $2 a day, with almost half of that population living on less than $1 a day. While it is acknowledged that education is one of the keys to alleviating poverty, it must also be emphasized that poverty is a major obstacle to education. A young person whose basic needs for food, clothing and shelter are not met cannot reasonably be expected to attend school or pursue education. In many poverty-stricken families young persons are taken out of school to help support their families. Therefore, it is necessary to effectively tackle poverty at the same time that we enhance access to all levels of education. By the same token, I do strongly believe that education will open up opportunities for all.

Mr. Kyaw Tint Swe (Myanmar), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Youth employment can serve as a tool for development. However, young persons in many parts of the world still face unemployment and underemployment. That fact inevitably hinders the development process and increases the vulnerability of youth to other kinds of social and political problems, including drug addiction and trafficking, human smuggling and trafficking, and recruitment into armed conflicts. For that reason, youth need to be empowered so that they can obtain knowledge and skills that meet the employment needs of the marketplace. At the same time, it is incumbent upon Governments to create decent employment opportunities for young persons. In that respect, my delegation welcomes the inclusion of the issue of youth employment in the World Summit Outcome. We owe it to all young persons to put the commitments our leaders have collectively undertaken into practice.

In 2002, Thailand adopted a national policy and 10-year plan of action on children and youth to promote the role of the family in supporting and building the capacity of young persons. In addition, various organizations that promote youth development have been supported and encouraged to coordinate their activities. Most importantly, the national policy and plan of action aim to empower young persons themselves with the relevant skills and knowledge so that they can make informed choices and decisions on matters relating to their own lives, as well as to society as a whole.

Youth is a critical period in life. It is when we make that important transition from childhood into adulthood. Young persons are full of aspirations, energy, and potential. They can contribute to all aspects of society's development. It is therefore crucial that we do not squander this opportunity to invest in the future. We must ensure that the basic needs and rights of the world's youth are guaranteed, so that they may attain their aspirations, fully utilize their energy, and fulfil their potential. The ways and means may vary according to the situations of each society, but our objective must be the same: to empower our youth, so that they may contribute to creating a more peaceful, prosperous and democratic world.

Ms. Meena (United Republic of Tanzania): I am honoured to read a statement on behalf of the young people of the United Republic of Tanzania, and I am grateful that the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania for giving us this opportunity to be heard. We also thank the United Nations for giving youth delegates the opportunity to participate and request all Governments to continue to send youth delegates to future United Nations meetings.

Youth constitute almost a third of the total population of the United Republic of Tanzania, and comprise 65 per cent of the labour force. We are thus a force to be reckoned with: we need to be heard in all decision-making processes, and to have youth issues mainstreamed into national development policies, strategies and programmes.

The Government of Tanzania has taken several measures to improve the situation of youth. However, many challenges still remain. Our country is still poor. It is confronted both with a heavy debt burden and a difficult struggle against diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria that affect a large segment of the youth population. Assisting the capacity of the Government to implement the Millennium Development Goals and the World Programme of Action on Youth is, in the end, to support our youth.

The majority of my fellow young people live in rural areas. Addressing the inequities and imbalances in development opportunities between rural and urban areas has to be given priority in order to curb the problem of rural-to-urban immigration. In view of a growing trend in this area, we are observing rapid growth in the urban informal sector and an increase in the incidence of hazardous employment and crime. Productive and decent work for young people has to be addressed as a strategy in poverty reduction and sustainable development. There is thus also a need to foster day-to-day growth of the informal sector through entrepreneurship development, infrastructure development and provision of capital.

We agree with the observation that globalization creates both opportunities and challenges. We need to be able to enhance our effective participation as well as increase our capacities to take advantage of opportunities in the national and global economies. If the quality of education in our countries is not improved and the digital divide not bridged, youth in the developing countries will continue to be spectators and will remain excluded from the economy.

As young people, we recognize that we too have responsibilities to be good citizens, to respect the rule of law in our societies and to contribute to the welfare of our communities. It is important for us to be organized and strive to participate fully in the social, economic, cultural and political life of our nations. To do so, we need mentoring and support.

I wish to conclude by stating that political will and commitment at the highest level nationally and internationally are of primary importance in creating an enabling environment for youth empowerment. We urge our societies and Governments to consider us as assets, not as problems. Please give us space and opportunities.

Mr. Kitaoka (Japan): Ten years after the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, there have been significant developments in the priority areas of the Programme. However, the current generation of young people is facing even more complicated challenges than those envisaged 10 years ago.

Japanese society has been undergoing a rapid transformation from its traditionally homogeneous nature to one that is more individualistic, due partly to the globalization of the economy, as well as to the advent of information technology, which has resulted in increased use of the Internet and of cellular phones.

In addition, a changing demographic structure has created more single-person households and one-child families as a result of our lower birth rate and ageing population. In order to promote sound development for the young people who will lead the nation and

contribute to international society in the twenty-first century, it is important to appropriately take into account today's social environment and take drastic action to that end as we formulate national youth development policy.

While Japan has the good fortune of having a high educational level, a side effect of this has been that we have fallen slightly behind in our commitment to a national youth development policy. In June 2003, however, a headquarters for youth development was set up within a cabinet office. In December 2003 — six months later — a national youth development policy, which articulates both basic principles and long-term Government policies, was adopted.

Taking the World Programme of Action fully into consideration, Japan also has been adopting measures for the development of youth in order to foster such human qualities as independence, responsibility, solidarity and tolerance, and to promote awareness of human rights and the notion of living in a global society.

While actively committing itself to the formulation and implementation of a national youth policy, Japan is also firmly engaged in international cooperation and supports youth in developing countries by providing development assistance, as well as by engaging in international exchanges and volunteer activities. For example, Japan has vigorously provided assistance in the field of education by building educational institutions, accepting teachers for training and dispatching experts, as well as by providing educational materials and classroom equipment.

In conclusion, the delegation of Japan strongly hopes that the review we are conducting at this meeting will contribute further to addressing the challenges facing youth and renewing the determination of every Member State to attain the goals of the World Programme of Action for Youth. At this tenth anniversary of the World Programme of Action, I would like to quote from the address of the Secretary-General to the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth in 1998:

> "... no one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts itself off from its youth severs its lifeline".

Mr. Ali (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation wishes to express its pleasure at participating in the work of this special session of the General Assembly, convened on the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. The convening of this session to review the efforts made and the progress achieved as regards the World Program of Action for Youth is clear evidence and a great affirmation of the growing concern paid by the international Organization and its Members to young people and of the space it sets aside in its programmes and plans for their concerns and various issues. Such importance was made necessary by the focus of attention being attracted by this segment of society, the young people who are pioneers in building nations and achieving renaissance, development and prosperity. This special session is to consider a renewal of the pledge to the youth that their agenda, their aspirations and the challenges they face will remain at the forefront of the priorities, programmes and concerns of the United Nations.

Allow me here to pay tribute to the contents of the report of the Secretary-General, which adopted an integrated, comprehensive approach to the concerns of youth and the challenges facing them. The report also monitored the efforts made nationally and internationally with a view to achieving such objectives. The five new concerns indicated supplement the priorities of the World Programme of Action so as to keep up with new developments and changes in the world arena. We welcome these five concerns; they are of great interest to us.

In this context, we also welcome the resolution submitted this morning, and we affirm our full readiness to tackle such concerns through youth programmes, plans and policies, with resolve, will and sheer determination.

Our appreciation also goes to the Secretariat units working in this field for their efforts and solid preparation that culminated in holding this important meeting and the activities leading up to it.

The concerns, issues and aspirations of Sudanese youth occupy a high priority in our Government's plans and programmes as an expression of our firm belief in the vital role of youth in progress and construction. Here, we would like to refer briefly to increasing efforts to adopt the concerns and issues of youth, foremost of which are the major achievements

resulting from the higher education revolution. That "revolution" increased the annual enrolment in universities from 12,000 in 1995 to 25,000 in the year 2000. This year, the number of male and female students who were accepted in the various higher education institutions has exceeded 40,000. Various universities and institutions of higher learning have experienced a major breakthrough with the number of universities increasing from only five in 1995 to more than 40 in 2005.

In the context of combating unemployment, training youth in various crafts and professions and providing opportunities and means of production, the State has adopted a major project upon the initiative of and in coordination with the Union for National Youth, one of the largest youth organizations in the Sudan. This project, entitled "Choosing the means of livelihood", is being undertaken under the generous auspices of His Excellency the President; and its implementation has reached an advance stage.

There are efforts to eradicate technological illiteracy by creating information centres and providing computers and creating youth and sports clubs. Youth have undertaken pioneer projects to defeat malaria and to create awareness of the adverse effects of drugs. They have also set up environmental and conservation programmes.

The signing of the Sudan Comprehensive Peace Agreement put an end to the war in the South and threw the doors wide open to a promising future of good tidings and hope for all Sudanese people. This brings hope for development, stability and prosperity. As is their wont, youth have been at the forefront in implementing programmes for the culture of peace and confidence-building and strengthening and in leading reconstruction and restoring normalcy.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to convey to this World Youth Meeting the greetings and appreciation of Sudanese youth and their aspirations for a productive partnership with all youth around the world in order to promote the peace efforts in the Sudan through reconstruction, the promise of peace, development, prosperity and well-being.

Mr. Gill (India): At the outset, please allow me to express our deep appreciation to the President of the General Assembly for his introductory remarks. I would also like to thank him for providing us this opportunity to review the progress made at the plenary level in implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

My delegation wishes to take this opportunity to reaffirm its support for the initiatives taken by the United Nations for all-round development of youth so that they become key agents for social change, economic development and technological innovation.

India is an ancient civilization but a young society. Nearly 56 per cent of the population is below the age of 24. India has been cognizant of the significant role of youth in national reconstruction and social change. Accordingly, national youth policies have been developed for composite and all-round development to enable them to develop a wider national perspective and to keep them strong in heart, body and mind. The thrust of our national youth policy centres on youth empowerment in different spheres of national life. The youth development programmes devised in India over the years have focussed on personality development, qualities of citizenship, enhanced commitment to community service, social justice, self-reliance, national integration and humanism.

The Prime Minister of India, Mr. Manmohan Singh, has referred to youth as the building blocks of our nation. He has drawn attention to the fact that the attitudes and outlook of youth on life and society play a determining role in shaping our destiny and our future.

Recognizing the importance of providing opportunities to the youth in particular, the Government of India has oriented its employment guarantee programmes to accommodate and provide for the aspirations of the growing numbers of young people that access the job market every year. There is a special emphasis on those who are disadvantaged, such as poor and rural youth. The National Rural Employment Act, passed by the Indian Parliament in August this year, for the first time makes the right to work a fundamental right. The Rural Employment Guarantee scheme, thus created, provides 100 days of assured employment every year to every rural household. The training of rural youth for self-employment scheme is designed to specifically train rural youth in skills to enable them to take up self-employment. The scheme stipulates that at least 40 per cent of the beneficiaries should be women and 50 per cent from socially backward groups.

Elementary education is now a fundamental right in India. The Government has resolved to increase public spending in education to at least six per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP). At least half of this amount would be spent in the development of primary and secondary education. To pursue universal elementary education on a priority basis, Sarva Shiksha Abhiya, India's universal elementary education scheme, was launched in 1998, covering the entire country. Education above the secondary level has a significant vocational training component so as to enable youth to acquire skills that would augment avenues for employment. Nehru Yuva Kendras, national youth clubs, have spearheaded the youth movement in the country.

The health needs of the youth are at the core of development of the health infrastructure in India. A holistic approach has been adopted, encompassing general, mental, physical and spiritual health of the young. Among the priority areas, HIV/AIDS is no longer treated as just a health issue, but as a most serious socio-economic development issue. Government spending on health has been increased, and it will be raised to two to three per cent of GDP over the next year.

My delegation would like to propose a special focus on youth employment in the work of the United Nations. In that regard, we welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General to promote the Youth Employment Network and look forward to working with other delegations to ensure that the Network can be developed in the coming months.

The challenges ahead of us for the all-round development of youth are daunting. But to be sure, with effective national and international efforts, they can be overcome. Issues related to youth should be seen in the context of social and economic development in the age of the information revolution and globalization.

The Secretary-General's report provides an incisive analysis on five new concerns related to youth: globalization, information and communication technology, HIV/AIDS and young people, youth and armed conflict and intergenerational problems. My delegation will work with other delegations for the inclusion of those concerns in the World Programme of Action for Youth.

Mr. Puja (Indonesia): My delegation is grateful for the comprehensive reports of the Secretary-General pertaining to progress in implementing the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (*A/60/61, A/60/133, A/60/156*). Our meeting is an opportune moment to review what has been accomplished and the obstacles encountered in implementing the World Programme since it was adopted 10 years ago.

My delegation notes significant progress made in a number of priority areas of the Programme of Action. However, progress has been uneven in those areas, including at the country level, which should be cause for concern. Further, Indonesia has noted that a number of complex challenges affecting youth have emerged since the inception of the Programme of Action in 1995.

In line with the priority areas of the Programme of Action, the Indonesian Government, under the leadership of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, is using a triple-track strategy of pro-growth, pro-employment and pro-poor measures that strongly reflect a people-centred development approach. That strategy includes measures to achieve greater sustainable economic growth through a combination of strong exports and increased domestic and foreign investment; stimulate the performance of employment-generating sectors; and promote the development of the rural economy and agriculture to alleviate poverty.

With that strategy, we aim, by 2009, to reduce the unemployment rate from 9.5 per cent to 5.1 per cent and to cut the poverty rate by half, to 8.1 percent. We also seek to attain a 6.6 per cent annual growth rate for the next five years, to be achieved through macroeconomic stability, fiscal sustainability and financial sector reforms. Additional resources will be allocated for social sector programmes and infrastructure development.

An integral part of the triple-track strategy is our pro-employment policy, which plays a significant role in the well-being of youth in Indonesia. As a lead country in the Secretary-General's initiative of the Youth Employment Network, Indonesia, in cooperation with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, convened a regional workshop on youth in poverty in South-East Asia from 2 to 4 August 2004 in Yogyakarta, involving participants at the Government and expert levels from Cambodia,

Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, the Philippines and Viet Nam. The workshop resulted in a number of significant inputs for the preparation of a review and action plans on youth employment, which is under our consideration at the present session.

With the support of the International Labour Organization, Indonesia has adopted its youth employment action plan for 2004-2007, which rests on four pillars: providing quality basic education to prepare youth for work, creating quality jobs for young men and women through formal sector job creation, fostering entrepreneurship and ensuring equal opportunities for young men and women.

In implementing that action plan, the Government of Indonesia has been working closely with local government to build a solid foundation to speed efforts to address youth employment. The Government of Indonesia started the programme by conducting various awareness-raising campaigns.

Since its launch last year, progress on the implementation of the action plan has not slackened. For example, Indonesia's awareness-raising campaigns have focused on changing traditional perceptions of gender roles and the division of responsibilities between women and men. That is being addressed through the revision of national curricula and national education in general.

Other initiatives exploring opportunities in emerging sectors such as tourism, mass media, health and education, environmental conservation, the service sector and information and communication technology are also being implemented. Indonesia fully recognizes that information and communication technology represents a key driving force for growth and job creation in other sectors. Meanwhile, the agro-industry sector is being improved in order to strengthen urban-rural linkages, which are critical for job creation, poverty reduction and combating hunger.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm Indonesia's commitment to the World Programme of Action for Youth. While Indonesia appreciates the ongoing support and cooperation provided by the relevant United Nations agencies, it looks forward to their further support for the five new areas of concern pertaining to youth.

Ms. Garant (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of the youth of Canada. It is a great honour for me and my delegation to be here today to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. But it is much more than a celebration. It is also a time to reflect on what has been done, what is being done and what should be done for young people around the world. How the global community responds to those challenges will determine how well its young citizens will be able to fulfil their potential.

Canada recognizes the need to invest in its youth. Such investments have contributed to Canada's diversity, as well as to one of the highest standards of living in the world.

As my youth colleague Mathew Whynott likes to say, the young people of this world are the future, but we also have to remember that they are the present. Canada therefore views the policies and programmes we initiate for youth today as a means to help us with the demographic challenges of tomorrow. With an ageing workforce, we must maximize the participation and well-being of all Canadians.

In 2003, there were more than 4 million Canadians between the ages of 15 and 24, representing 14 per cent of our total population. Approximately 4 per cent of those youth are aboriginal or indigenous, and they often live in rural and isolated areas and face serious socio-economic challenges, especially related to the lack of education and skills. Immigrants and members of visible minority communities, who make up 28 per cent of Canadian youth, tend to live in major urban centres and face linguistic and cultural challenges. While half of our youth are in post-secondary education, many without advanced education will face problems when entering a workforce where almost all jobs are now highly skilled. Those issues are of major concern for Canada as it faces the impending retirement of its baby boomers and feels the increasing impacts of globalization.

Literacy is a crucial concern. Consider only one statistic: those with the lowest literacy have an unemployment rate of 26 per cent as compared with 4 per cent for those with the highest. Recent immigrants now take seven or eight years to catch up to the literacy levels of Canadians in their same age group. As a result, they may face long-term incomes up to 20 per cent less than those born in Canada. A recent

report by Statistics Canada has revealed that a mere 1 per cent increase in the average literacy rate in Canada will lead to an increase of $18.4 billion in the gross domestic product. It will drive prosperity, cultural inclusion, and social advancement.

Economic growth is another outcome of prioritizing education. With literacy and proper skills training, a young person can go on to obtain a secure job that will contribute to the economic advancement of his or her community.

(*spoke in English*)

The Youth Employment Strategy is the Government of Canada's commitment to helping young people, particularly those facing barriers to employment. That strategy was initially introduced in 1997 to address some of the challenges faced by youth in making a successful transition from school to work. In 2003 it was realigned to focus on the value and need for skills, work experience and information to make sure that youth were ready to compete in the labour market of the twenty-first century, including through the acquisition of further education and skills development.

The Government of Canada is actively involved in engaging youth through consultations. For example, youth were consulted on a Government online initiative that resulted in the "youth.gc.ca" website, designed specifically for young Canadians. I happen to be living proof of how the Government of Canada partners with its youth: I was chosen as a United Nations delegate for this week's meetings through an online essay writing competition. There is a strong support for young Canadians to take an active role in policymaking through online and in-person consultations and that support continues to grow.

As we move into the future and as globalization progresses, Canada recognizes the international challenge of addressing the welfare of youth. And while we address youth issues nationally, international links must not be ignored. The Canadian International Development Agency supports an array of initiatives to ensure equitable, inclusive and sustainable development, as well as pragmatic improvements in the lives of people around the world, including youth. The Agency engages Canadians abroad in missions that work to meet the goals of the World Programme of Action for Youth in the area of education. Canadian international efforts focus on four main areas. The first is improving the quality, safety and relevance of basic education, so that student enrolment and motivation remain high. The second area of focus is removing barriers to resolve gender inequality in education and strengthening the programming in girls' education. Another focus is providing education on HIV/AIDS prevention and supporting the better integration of such programmes in the curricula. The fourth element provides education for girls and boys in conflict, post-conflict or emergency situations to introduce stability and protection in emergency settings. That work allows Canada to contribute to the efforts of countries around the world.

Clearly, much needs to be done to ensure the well-being of the world's youth. We will continue to work towards improving the outcomes for youth in Canada and around the world. We ask for the recognition and involvement of youth; we ask for tolerance and understanding; and we ask for implementation. It is time for action. We all know what to do. Now, please let us do it.

Mr. Lim (Singapore): It gives me great pleasure to participate in this meeting of the General Assembly devoted to a discussion of youth issues, and particularly to an evaluation of progress made in implementing the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

In the concluding recommendations of his World Youth Report 2005, the Secretary-General stated that young people should be seen as essential partners for building a society of the future. He affirmed that Governments should continuously evaluate their youth policies and involve young people in that evaluation, and that including youth in policymaking would increase the commitment of young people to the policies that affect them and create greater opportunities for cooperation and true youth participation.

Those statements are consonant with Singapore's own recent policies to better engage our youth in shaping our country's future. Indeed, at his swearing-in address on 12 August 2004, our Prime Minister made a similar call to young Singaporeans to step forward to make a difference to themselves, to their fellow citizens and to Singapore.

Youth forms the basis of a country's future; their aspirations and endeavours will provide the momentum to propel countries forward.

To better engage our youth, our Ministry of Community Development and Sports underwent a structural and name change in 2004 to become the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports. Singapore also adopted a youth strategy based on the three elements. First, we must assist youth to develop a stake in society by creating opportunities for them to positively influence their environment. Secondly, we should ensure that youth have a say in national affairs by involving them in the process of consultation. Thirdly, we need to provide youth with the support they need to develop and participate meaningfully in society, through facilitation, mentorship and other assistance mechanisms.

The Singapore Government initiated an intensive six-week youth consultation exercise from August to September 2004. More than 2,000 young Singaporeans from both Singapore and overseas were invited to share their aspirations for themselves and for Singapore, and to help shape the Government's new agenda for youth. They spoke passionately about their beliefs and shared their ideas readily. More than 100 young participants later volunteered to follow up on the suggestions raised during the consultation exercise. They formed working groups, proposed a further 91 recommendations and championed issues that had emerged as key concerns during the consultations.

The working group process enabled the Singapore Government to take one step further, moving beyond public consultation to collaborative action. Our young people assumed leadership over the process and over some of the ideas that are now being implemented. Those include a festival, "Shine", organized by young people for young people, that celebrates the talents of our youth; an Internet portal, "youth.sg", as a first-stop virtual meeting place and resource centre for youth to start their own community projects; a 1.2 hectare youth community hub designed, developed and operated by youth in the heart of the city for youth cultural and community activities; and a "young changemakers" programme for young Singaporeans to assess and award seed grants to community projects proposed by their peers.

It is also important for our youth to understand and appreciate the realities of the world beyond their immediate communities. In that regard, the Singapore Government has also undertaken efforts to initiate regional and international youth exchanges to connect Singapore's youth to the world and to prepare them to be world-ready. Through such strategic linkups, youth leaders of participating youth organizations have the opportunity to share best practices in areas of youth sector development with their peers overseas. It is that type of informal and intuitive mutual understanding that will pave the way for closer ties between young people across countries.

Youth is a key resource for society. If we build on the potential of our youth, communities will develop and grow stronger. The future awaits us, and it lies in the hands of our young people.

Mr. Abel (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like at the outset to acknowledge the young people of Brazil and my colleagues from the National Youth Secretariat, who are joining in our work via the Internet.

Ten years have passed since the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. We all have a great deal to celebrate, but there is still a long way to go before we can guarantee future generations the right to enjoy a better world — a world of real opportunity, justice and solidarity.

Brazil has 34 million young people, making up 20 per cent of the population. It is the young people who suffer most from the harsh reality of social inequality in our country and throughout the world. Efforts in the context of the World Programme of Action for Youth have come together with actions taken by the Government and the people of Brazil to set out integrated policies to improve the living conditions of our young people.

Brazil declared 2005 to be the National Year for Youth, and I would like to outline some of the actions that have been taken for the benefit of young people. In February, the Government of Brazil established the National Youth Secretariat, under the auspices of the general secretariat of the presidency of the Republic. We also established a general counsel for youth — a special forum for intergenerational dialogue and the elaboration of policies aimed at young people. Furthermore, a national programme for young people, entitled "Projovem", has been launched, with a budget of more than $100 million. The goal of that programme is to make up the significant educational deficit in our country, as well as to prepare young people for the labour market. By the end of 2005, more than 200,000 young people will have benefited from that

programme. We are convinced that that initiative, as well as our First Job Programme, will soon bear fruit.

Brazil had the privilege of hosting the Latin American and Caribbean Youth Leadership Summit, organized by the United Nations Development Fund, which brought together young leaders from the region to discuss the Millennium Development Goals from a youth perspective.

Thanks to our national HIV/AIDS policy, which addresses prevention, assistance and treatment and guarantees universal access to antiretroviral medication, without discrimination and with respect for human rights, the rate of infection in the general population is very low. Furthermore, our schools health and prevention programme provides information on HIV to all students and distributes condoms free of charge.

With regard to girls and young women, policy priorities focus on gender-related violence and the promotion of sexual and reproductive health. To that end, action is being coordinated among various Government agencies and civil society.

The Brazilian Government is firmly committed to combating hunger and poverty. In that context, Brazil reaffirms the commitment that it made in 2004 as one of the leading countries of the Youth Employment Network. We commend the Secretary-General for his initiative aimed at enabling young people to get a foothold in the labour market, thereby contributing to the reduction of social inequalities.

Brazil is carrying out activities in all areas of the World Programme of Action for Youth. The dialogue between the Government and civil society is extremely important in that process. We are convinced that public policies for youth are among the most important means of achieving comprehensive development, not only in our country, but also throughout the world.

Mr. Bhattarai (Nepal): We are meeting here today to evaluate the progress made in the implementation of the 15 priority areas in the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

Five years ago, our leaders promised the people of the United Nations that they would improve their quality of life through the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The establishment of the United Nations Youth Fund and the launching of the Youth Employment Network encouraged the promotion of national action plans for youth employment.

The outcome document contains commitments to the goals of full and productive employment and decent work for all, including for women and young people. Those documents provide a road map for social and economic development — an explicit commitment to tackle inequalities in income, opportunity and power, to promote social integration and to address the issue of the social protection and welfare of children, youth, the elderly and disabled persons.

Young people represent the future. Youth is a time both of opportunity and of challenge. Thanks to several development forums, the case for investing in young people has been made clearer, and today youth has come to occupy the centre stage of international development. An investment in youth is an investment in the future. In order to harness the potential of youth, and thereby enrich society, we must give young people — particularly those from marginalized and disadvantaged communities — a say and a share at the grass-roots level in the development process, ensuring that they play a full role in shaping a bright and secure future for all of us. A committed and aware young person is an asset to the community and the country.

The fact that some countries are poor while others are prosperous poses a great threat to international peace and security. Poverty is a curse and a scar for any society. People living in poverty are vulnerable and voiceless. Traffickers and terrorists recruit them by offering tempting rewards. People without income or security fall prey to crime and violence, and often get trapped in protracted conflict. The economic and social costs become pervasive.

We must address the severe inequalities and inequities, and put in place programmes to provide employment opportunities and ensure institutional and policy development, as well as civil society initiatives for the education and health of children. Youth empowerment is necessary in order to combat the vulnerability of young people to the influence of fundamentalism, radicalism, insurgency and terrorism.

Nepal has been the victim of senseless violence perpetrated by terrorists, which has taken a great toll in terms of lives, and has had an adverse impact on young people and prevented them from engaging in constructive processes. Nepal's current development

plan includes a policy reform package, which addresses, among other issues, social inclusion, empowerment, gender mainstreaming, education and health for all, income-generating activities, the prohibition of socio-cultural discriminatory practices, targeted and time-bound development programmes and participatory governance. Our utmost priority at the moment is to restore peace and order, put development efforts back on track and provide opportunities for all to realize their potential. Nepal looks forward to working with the international community to engage young people, develop their capacity, tap their knowledge and skills and promote and support their participation in economic and social life through an integrated package of measures.

In this increasingly interconnected and interdependent world, creating a sustained global partnership with young people is a must for any programme to succeed. Development policies should therefore be supportive of growth, poverty reduction and the creation of decent work for all.

For this to happen, there must be urgent action on various international commitments and sustained global partnership for providing resources, trade opportunities and debt relief measures to least developed countries, taking into account their special needs and vulnerability. It is equally important to have the multidimensional strategy to fight the closely linked problems of poverty and terrorism at the national, regional and global levels without any selective standards.

Let us join hands to channel the power of youth into a precious resource for development.

Mr. Le Luong Minh (Viet Nam): My delegation welcomes the convening of this plenary meeting of the General Assembly devoted to the evaluation of the progress made in the implementation of the World Programme for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

The round table held yesterday as a forum for the expression and exchange of youth perspectives was a meaningful and useful event. We were pleased to see a young delegate from Viet Nam participating in yesterday's round table as a presenter for the Asia-Pacific region.

Of the 80 million people of Viet Nam, 16 million are young people between the ages of 15 and 24; that is nearly 20 per cent of the country's population. Viewing young people as the country's future, the Government of Viet Nam attaches great importance to addressing youth issues, including the 10 priority areas of the World Programme of Action, which are interdependent and interlinked. In this statement I will touch upon three of them.

First, as regards youth and employment, in our National Youth Development Strategy to the Year 2010, which was approved by the Government in 2003, unemployment was identified as the biggest difficulty currently facing our young people. Many efforts, including policies, programmes and concrete measures, have been undertaken to address this problem. Vulnerable groups among young people, such as first-time job seekers, unskilled workers and young women, receive special attention in various job orientation and training activities. The Government's pro-poor policies and programmes provide for easier access to microcredits by young people, especially those living in poorer areas, so that they can start their own businesses. The Viet Nam Association of Young Entrepreneurs provides assistance to young people in starting up and running their businesses. As nearly 1.4 million young job seekers enter the labour market annually, our Government has set a target of creating 1.5 million new jobs each year.

The second area is youth and education. In order to secure a better chance at finding full and productive employment, it is imperative that young people receive adequate education and training. To this end, achieving Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2, universal primary education, is a must. During the 2003-2004 school year, the net primary enrolment rate was 94.4 per cent, while the completion rate rose to 99.82 per cent. If the current annual growth rate of 0.5 per cent is maintained, we will achieve universal primary education by 2015.

We have set a range of targets as contained in the Development Strategy for Training and Education for 2001-2010, the National Action Plan of Education for All for 2003-2015, the National Targeted Programme on Education and Training for 2001-2010 and the five-year and annual socio-economic development plans. Public resources allocated to education and training have constantly increased.

The third area is youth and poverty. The focus on employment and education, among other areas of priority, is a central part of our poverty reduction

strategy. Although the proportion of young people in poverty is lower than the national average in Viet Nam — 18 per cent compared to 24 per cent — we attach great importance to poverty reduction for young people. Our national targets include a 50 per cent reduction in the number of people living below the poverty line during the period 2001-2010. To achieve this, special attention is given to rural and remote areas and to minority groups.

The first survey assessment of Vietnamese youth was launched in August of this year. The survey noted in its chapter 1 that "The majority of Vietnamese young people are hardworking, strongly connected to their families, optimistic about the future and generally satisfied with their employment situation". It has also been observed that Viet Nam, with its high rates of literacy and numeracy, long experience with mass organizations and ability to mobilize people down to the village level, has sufficient absorptive capacity to continue moving forward in developing programmes and strategies for reducing poverty.

At this plenary meeting we are evaluating our individual national implementation of the World Programme of Action. There is an important aspect of this process of implementing the Programme that also needs to be emphasized: cooperation and assistance among countries and among young people from different countries in terms of experience-sharing, technical and financial assistance, training, et cetera. Such cooperation and assistance should and can be carried out at both regional and international levels.

In conclusion, young people are not only the beneficiaries of the aforementioned policies, programmes and targets. They are also the driving force in implementing those policies, programmes and targets. Investing in our youth means, as always, investing in our future.

Ms. Damsgaard-Larsen (Denmark): As a youth delegate in the Danish delegation to the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, and as a representative of the Danish Youth Council, it is a great honour and a privilege for me to address the Assembly. It is a great privilege because, in general, young people — and in particular young women — have a hard time getting their voices heard. Too often, decision-makers base their decisions on experiences that are not shared by all young people, and therefore the decisions do not always take into consideration our increasingly globalized world.

Too often, young people are not included in decisions that impact on their lives at both the national and the international levels. Those decisions could be improved or made more sustainable by including the perspectives of young people. Too often, young people are perceived to be associated with problems instead of solutions. In order to be solved, those problems need the involvement of young people.

Please, have confidence in young people. It is true that young people are indeed overrepresented in statistics related to negative issues. I would like to comment on two of those issues, HIV and terrorism. Half the world's HIV victims are infected before they turn 25, and disgruntled young men and women are in the frontline of terrorism and armed conflict. If we want to meet those and other major challenges, we must involve young people. Nothing will be achieved for young people without the participation of young people.

When it comes to the battle against AIDS, it is absolutely pivotal to encourage young people to follow the ABC strategy: abstain, be faithful or use condoms. As noted with respect to the Millennium Development Goals, only by sharply reducing the rate of HIV-prevalence among young people will we be able to stop the pandemic.

With respect to counter-terrorism measures, they should not be just about weapons. Equally important is shielding young people from totalitarian ideas by providing them with positive experiences of democracy and cultural tolerance.

We will not be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals or our shared vision of a more peaceful planet unless young people are genuinely recognized and utilized as a resource in society. We can do much more nationally, as well as internationally, to involve young people in solving major problems in our global community.

First, it is important to compile detailed statistics and data on problems concerning young people. In that respect, the World Bank deserves credit for making young people the theme of its World Development Report 2007 and for consulting young people about which problems to include in the Report. The Bank has set an example.

Secondly, obligations already agreed should be met. The ideas set out in the World Programme of Action for Youth have yet to be fulfilled. Ten years after the Programme's adoption, a lot still needs to be done, and too many Member States have not given the Programme the attention it deserves.

Thirdly, we lack a comprehensive strategy for involving young people in the struggle to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Investing in young people is a prudent choice. There is a strong link between investing in young people and fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals.

And finally, there needs to be a stronger focus on young people's global awareness and their understanding of global issues. More education on global issues is needed to combat intolerance and promote international solidarity.

We ask for the recognition and the involvement of youth. We ask for tolerance and understanding, and we ask for implementation.

Numerous agreements have been signed to make poverty past history, provide education for all, promote the rights of the child and so on — agreements with great visions and ideas for a better world, agreements that call for action.

We need to make an extraordinary effort, if the visions expressed in agreements already signed are to become a reality. Increasing the involvement of young people will fuel much-needed implementation. It is quite interesting to note that the abbreviation of the World Programme of Action for Youth is "WPAY", which in English is pronounced "we pay", because I am certain that young people are willing to contribute. But if young people are to be encouraged to do so, they need to be involved in the decisions that define the solutions they will have to pay for. It is time for action. We all know what to do. Now, please let us do it.

Mr. Kariyawasam (Sri Lanka): The World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, adopted by the General Assembly in 1995 in resolution 50/81, gives us guidance for the formulation of our vision and policies for youth. It contains significant benchmarks and targets to be realized to make youth a central focus of national and international development agendas.

The vision for youth beyond 2000 that the World Programme of Action has fostered is designed to facilitate coherent and coordinated actions at multiple levels of Government and the international community. Its emphasis on the adoption of a multi-stakeholder approach, making youth key players, seeks to give youth a significant, participatory role and voice in national and local-level decision-making processes.

Today, 10 years after the Programme's adoption, we are meeting to review the situation of youth and the achievements made in implementing the World Programme of Action. In doing so, however, we must not ignore the factors that dominate the global issues of today but which were not discernible at the time of the Programme's adoption. Since that time, the world has changed in many ways that no one envisaged, and new obstacles and challenges have arisen as a result.

Considerable obstacles remain on achieving decent standards of social development. A notable constraint is the increased strain on precious resources, which are increasingly being diverted to meet new and emerging threats to peace, security, democracy and the rule of law. Other negative developments include the growing loss of domestic policy leverage as a result of globalization, the falling volume of the international trade of middle-income and less developed countries, increasing oil prices, the widening digital divide and the globalization of terror.

All those factors continue to severely affect many developing countries, especially middle-income and less developed countries. As a result, those countries have a severely limited ability to mobilize domestic resources, meaning that less attention can be given to vital sectors. The continued reduction in the quality of foreign aid, coupled with the growing strain on domestic resources, has only deepened the perception of inequality and inequity within societies. That stark, ongoing reality affects young people, who are so vital for the continued development of our societies.

Another contemporary phenomenon affecting youth in developing countries such as mine is large-scale migration abroad, as young people look for work and better living conditions. While that phenomenon helps both the receiving and sending countries, it has also created new challenges. In that regard, we are heartened that the outcome document of the recently concluded summit has referred to the issue of migration and that the next session of the General Assembly will discuss the issue of migration and development. Since the phenomenon of migration

primarily affects youth and their aspirations, it is essential that all United Nations agencies make every effort to mainstream the issue of migration in all its aspects.

I shall now say a few words about the progress made in implementing the World Programme of Action for Youth in Sri Lanka.

In Sri Lanka the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has taken several steps to promote youth activities. Those include the promotion of youth clubs, the establishment of technical and vocational training centres and the organization of cultural exchanges and integration activities. Training activities are conducted in various fields to improve the skills and abilities of young people who leave school and guide them towards decent employment. Sports and recreation facilities contribute to nurturing a healthy generation of youth and create opportunities for the better utilization of time.

As a country with good social indicators, Sri Lanka has always given high priority to programmes related to youth and has taken into account the views and concerns of young people in formulating national policies and strategies, especially with respect to education and employment. The national action plans of Sri Lanka have focused on enhancing the quality of education and on providing equal opportunities for employment. Youth participation in sub-national and national decision-making processes has always been encouraged as a matter of national policy.

For many years throughout our 2,500-year recorded history, and especially since the provision of universal franchise for our people in 1931, we have been mindful that it is young people that make or break a society. Hence, we are committed to the welfare of youth in order to ensure the well-being of our society.

Mr. Peretin (Croat a): My name is Matej Peretin, and I am a youth delegate and a member of the Croatian delegation to the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. I am 14 years old and a first-year student at the Petar Preradović grammar school in Slatina, a town in northern Croatia. I was recently elected President of the Local Youth Council of Slatina, which operates within the framework of the Croatian National Youth Council.

Croatia has aligned itself with the statement of the European Union delivered by the United Kingdom. I wish to take this opportunity to describe how young people in Croatia have implemented, at the local level, the recommendations of the World Programme of Action for Youth and the relevant parts of the Millennium Goals.

Croatia has had a national youth policy since 2000. Among the key priorities of this policy are the participation of youth in decision-making, non-formal education and youth employment. Consistent with the call of the World Programme of Action for Youth for full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making, a National Youth Council was initiated and registered in Croatia in 2001. The Council operates as a national civil society organization, open to all young people in Croatia between the ages of 15 and 29.

The Croatian National Youth Council has signed a social partnership agreement with the Croatian Government, and the Government has approved the Council as a member of the State working group for the elaboration of a national programme of action for youth. In 2001, the President of the Council was invited to participate in the Croatian President's expert group for youth.

The Council has also represented the interests of Croatian youth at a number of international events, including, inter alia, the fourth session of the World Youth Forum, held in Dakar; the International Labour Organization Global Employment Forum; and the World Summit on the Information Society, held in Geneva. In 2005, the Council was awarded the World Youth Award by the World Assembly of Youth as one of the three most effective national youth councils globally. The Secretary-General of the Croatian National Youth Council serves as the Vice-President of the World Assembly of Youth.

The network of local youth councils in Croatia relies significantly upon information and communications technology. I invite delegates to visit the Croatian National Youth Council booth near Conference Room 4 here at United Nations Headquarters to learn more about the Council's governance and activities.

The Croatian delegation invites youth delegates and Governments of Member States to re-commit themselves to the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth. In this regard, we encourage Member States that have not yet done so to

consider adopting a full and effective youth participation agenda at all levels of Government in relation to the social, economic and political processes that concern young people. In Croatia, we have found that direct elections for local youth councils have been important in strengthening legitimacy. In addition, cooperation between local civil society organizations, governmental bodies and the private sector can be helpful in developing funding schemes for employment and educational opportunities for youth.

Finally, allow me to draw the Assembly's attention to a Croatian initiative. In 2002, we began negotiations on the establishment of a Croatian Youth Bank, focused on job creation for young people. In the same year, youth representatives from around the world gathered in Croatia and expressed their will to be included in the process of establishing a world youth bank. In 2002, a special resolution on a world youth bank was adopted by most representatives of national youth councils across the globe. The World Youth Bank Network, an international non-governmental organization that is the preparatory body for the establishment of a world youth bank, is now operating from its administrative headquarters in Zagreb. It is my pleasure to invite all participants to join us tomorrow at the World Youth Bank Project side event, which will focus on a potential strategy to address the global problem of the high level of youth unemployment. Members can also learn more about this project on the World Wide Web at www.w-yb.org.

Finally, allow me to express the intention of the Government of the Republic of Croatia to continue to attach special importance to the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth.

Ms. Hennouda (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): It is an honour for me to represent my country at this youth forum. We particularly welcome the presence of young people at the United Nations today, as well as the aspirations they are expressing.

The reports we are hearing today as we consider the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, adopted 10 years ago, give us a glimpse of the development of youth and assess the Programme's 10 priority areas so that we can fill the gaps. We note with satisfaction the increased awareness by States of the importance of young people's potential and of involving them in the decision-making process. We also welcome national efforts to ensure gender equality, and we encourage States to continue making progress on education and literacy.

However, continuing youth unemployment, the consequences of drug use and HIV/AIDS arouse our anxiety and concern, since they threaten the lives and environment of our young people.

The World Youth Report 2005 (*A/60/61*) draws our attention, in particular, to the impact of globalization and of the information and communications technology, which are described as additional issues of concern which youth and their leaders must face.

Certainly, globalization continues to give rise to ambivalent feelings, on the one hand because of its ability to create wealth and improve the material well-being of our societies, but, on the other, because of the phenomenon of exclusion that it creates. How can we diminish this exclusion? How can we move towards overall prosperity? How can we benefit from globalization, create jobs for young people and eradicate poverty? How can we ensure that information and telecommunications technology becomes a means for rapprochement, mutual understanding and the strengthening of links among young people throughout the world?

Today, we must find solutions to those questions in order to attain the goals we set at the time of the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth. Our Governments have the tasks of understanding globalization in order to better harness it, generating innovative ideas for job creation, steering young people away from drugs and protecting them from HIV/AIDS. To succeed, Governments must deal with those challenges together with young people by directly involving them in the identification of their problems and the search for solutions.

Algeria attaches great importance to young people, who constitute three quarters of the country's population. The country's public authorities, conscious of that reality, are making significant efforts to integrate that force for development into society, regardless of gender.

The Government has made a strategic and productive investment in education. All categories of public education institutions are free at all levels. Public education is mandatory and provided for all, and

we have achieved a 93.6 per cent rate of school attendance among young people. The Government has dealt with the issue of youth not enrolled in school through special measures to ensure their social and professional integration.

The national employment policy, which occupies an important place in overall Government policy, is supported by a national strategy aimed at fighting poverty and exclusion. The Government of my country has implemented alternative employment measures essentially managed by a network of agencies specialized in promoting youth employment.

The unemployment rate has been reduced thanks to innovative measures such as microcredits, the promotion of entrepreneurship, labour-intensive work of public utility, pre-employment contracts, local salaried employee initiatives and compensation for activities of general benefit. Many young people have been able to acquire professional experience and practical knowledge making them employable.

Determined to pursue its efforts and respond to the expectations of young people, Algeria has just carried out a study on their aspirations, resulting in a database on young people — girls and boys — of all professional categories, ages and education levels, with respect to their needs and aspirations in the numerous areas of their life such as their relationships with family, school and teachers, the street, youth establishments, health, languages, the role of women, sports, leisure activities, information and communication technologies, politics and the future.

That study has shown that, while progress has been made in various areas of concern to young people, domestic and international challenges, which are now interlinked, remain to be tackled. In response to globalization, the information society and communication technologies, at the domestic level we must promote leisure activities for young people as a means of social integration, provide quality education, ensure the highest level of professional qualifications among youth, create an environment favourable to our intellectual elite so as to halt their emigration, and ensure sustainable employment.

To achieve those goals, my country will once again consult young people to collect their opinions on the proposed solutions. We are convinced that the recommendations contained in the reports of the Secretary-General will provide relevant guidelines for our country's success in its mission.

The Acting President: I should like to inform the Assembly that the representatives of Lesotho and Nicaragua have requested to participate in this meeting. As the list of speakers was closed at 11 a.m. this morning, may I ask the Assembly whether there is any objection to the inclusion of those delegations in the list of speakers?

I see none. Lesotho and Nicaragua are therefore included in the list of speakers.

I remind speakers that we now have 16 speakers on our list for this meeting. Given the time limit and in order to accommodate all speakers for this meeting, I urge speakers to limit their statements to four minutes.

Ms. Mchiela (Malawi): Let me begin by aligning my delegation with the statement made by Mozambique on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). I would also like to congratulate the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report contained in document A/60/61.

The World Youth Report 2005 states that sub-Saharan Africa is home to large numbers of young people living in extreme poverty. It has been proven that when the health, education and employment needs of the youth are addressed in earnest, the result is poverty reduction, economic growth and human development. The international community has the moral obligation to match its youth-related programmes with the requisite resources.

Malawi attaches great importance to youth participation. We believe that the involvement of youth in decisions that affect society is beneficial from both a policy-making and a youth development perspective. We have learned over time that failure to acknowledge the particular challenges that youth face or to involve them in devising solutions leads to failure in reducing overall poverty levels. In recognition of that fact, the poverty reduction and economic growth strategies put in place by the Malawian Government have incorporated youth programmes.

Malawi has a national youth policy that guides youth development programmes and services with the full participation of young people at all levels. That has led to a mushrooming of youth clubs and non-governmental organizations.

Through its national AIDS commission, Malawi continues to implement programmes focusing on support, treatment and care for those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. In addition, the national plan of action for orphans and other vulnerable children was launched to deal with the unprecedented number of orphans and strengthen the capacity of families and communities to provide adequate care and support for those affected. A life-skills programme targeting youth is an important component of the action plan.

Convinced that empowering youth through education will enable them to have equal access to participation in the national development agenda, Malawi implemented universal free primary education under the national Education for All programme. Through that programme, the enrolment of pupils in primary schools increased tremendously. However, access to secondary and tertiary education remains a serious challenge for all children, particularly orphans and youth from poor families, owing to the lack of funds for school fees and other educational support. One initiative in that respect is the provision of student grants. Nevertheless, the number of beneficiaries is far inferior to the demand coming from of needy youth.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Malawi has implemented several initiatives to protect youth at risk of being abused. They include vocational skills training for self-help, training in entrepreneurship, the review of laws on child justice, care and protection and the training of social workers. Further, the Government has introduced measures such as the creation of a revolving fund for loans to youth to give young people access to financial capital to a set up small businesses.

Leisure activities are an important aspect of youth development. Malawi continues to establish youth centres in urban and rural areas. The aim of those centres is to engage youth in extra-curricular activities for their physical growth and mental development.

In conclusion, Malawi is committed to keeping youth issues high on its development agenda. I would also like to stress the critical importance of international cooperation if developing countries such as Malawi are to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals and the priority areas of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

Mr. García González (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): El Salvador fully endorses the statement of the Rio Group on this item.

The Government of El Salvador was committed to sending a high-level representative to this meeting to review the 10 years of the World Programme of Action for Youth: the Secretary of Youth, who holds a national office created in 2004 with the fundamental objective of ensuring the active participation of young people in decisions of national interest and on issues that directly affect youth.

However, two natural disasters of great destructive power — the eruption of the Ilamatepec volcano and the flooding caused by Tropical Storm Stan — have caused the death of 62 Salvadorans and the evacuation of 53,930 others throughout the country over the last three days, compelling our Government to declare a state of national emergency and to suspend official engagements scheduled for the present so that Government officials can attend first and foremost to the emergency.

Given the negative impact of those natural disasters on the sustainable development of our country, and given the vulnerability of young people, among other social groups, to natural disasters, we believe that we should focus our statement on the intrinsic links between hunger, poverty, the environment and situations of risk for young people, in particular the violence caused by the activities of youth gangs. Those issues fall within the three main clusters of issues proposed by the Secretary-General in his World Youth Report 2005 (*A/60/61*).

As President Elías Antonio Saca González noted in his address to the Assembly at the sixtieth session (*see A/60/PV.12*), in spite of our country's determined commitment to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, in particular the reduction of poverty and the fight against hunger, the negative impact on development caused by external factors such as costly fuel and natural disasters of the kind striking our country in recent weeks is cause for concern.

My country notes that those factors require a significant share of our human and financial resources, compelling us to redirect to those emergencies resources that could have been used in strategic areas of development. Thus, there is a clear link between the fight against poverty and hunger on the one hand and, on the other, the protection of the environment and the

reduction of vulnerabilities related to outstanding development issues.

Young people constitute the largest segment of the population of El Salvador. Thus, the policies and actions currently being implemented to tackle development challenges directly affect young people. El Salvador responded by appointing a Secretary of Youth, whose department is working, with broad participation, on a national youth policy.

That policy covers various objectives related to young people, such as improving their quality of life and their development at all levels and attending to the needs of vulnerable and marginalized sectors of youth. To achieve those objectives, concrete action is being taken in five main areas: promoting the independence of young people, promoting their well-being, developing awareness of their civic responsibilities, supporting the development of the creativity of youth and creating opportunities for vulnerable and marginalized youth.

As well, it is necessary to coordinate the various efforts and initiatives of the Office of the Secretary of Youth, public institutions and non-governmental and private-sector organizations involved in the promotion of youth issues, as well as those of youth organizations and movements, which are a focus and the beneficiaries of that national policy.

It is important to stress that the Government of El Salvador considers that young people represent not only the future hope of the country but also a source of great potential for the present. A sign of that commitment was the appointment of the Secretary of Youth, whose main tasks include the promotion of sport as a way to turn youth, and the general population, away from vice and idleness.

Allow me to conclude by recognizing the fact that in a globalized world, in which information technologies play an important role in highlighting areas of common interest for young people, it is increasingly clear that international cooperation, respect for the purposes and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and solidarity constitute the cornerstone for constructive progress in creating a society for all ages.

Ms. Taj El Diae (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, we express our gratitude for the holding of these meetings. We endorse the statement made by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Rio Group.

First, we note that with everything that has been done over the past 10 years, the only result we have achieved is that the world's young people continue to suffer from hunger, poverty, unemployment and a lack of education, all of which are products of the dominant economic system. In other words, they are the result of the policies of the United States of America and its allies, which implement policies against the interests of the entire world, with the single objective of increasing exploitation and legitimizing and safeguarding its domination of the world's markets, resources and peoples.

By contrast, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has implemented a set of social measures within the framework of a holistic State social policy to promote economic and social development from a humanist perspective. In that context, our Government has been implementing a series of social programmes, called missions, aimed at integrating young people, in particular marginalized young people, into the social development of the country. Among them are the Robinson, Ribas and Sucre missions. The Robinson mission has succeeded in teaching more than 1.5 million people to read and write. In a few days, our country will be declared an illiteracy-free zone. More than 600,000 young people have graduated thanks to the Ribas mission. For economic reasons, those young people had never had the opportunity to pursue their secondary education, and have now done so without cost. Our Government even gives them a grant to carry out their studies. The Sucre mission is open to young people from the Ribas mission and to marginalized young people so that they can enter university.

In addition, young people in Venezuela are involved in the political life of the State. For example, citizens having reached the age of 21 can run for office as members of the National Assembly.

All those initiatives aim to fulfil the constitutional principle of a genuinely participatory and activist democracy, of the people, for the people and with the people.

In our countries, young people have a notable role in the fight against imperialism. In Venezuela, we are aware of the fact that young people of the entire world have been affected by the consequences of the

neo-liberal policies of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and the Group of Eight. The gap between the rich and the poor is widening. Exploitation, hunger, unemployment, inadequate health care, poverty and destitution continue to grow as a result of imperialist economic and military policies that have catastrophic effects for millions of people throughout the world, including youth.

Our message is that we, the young, must fight against hunger and war and fight for peace, social justice, the self-determination of peoples and a world free of nuclear weapons. We must fight for our roots. We must fight for our traditions and cultures — in short, for our dignity. That is our foremost duty as young people. We must ensure that the world recognizes the value of those aspirations. It is also our duty to ensure that humankind survives the destruction that threatens our environment.

I recall once more the words of President Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías: neither our arms nor our souls shall rest until humankind has been saved.

Mr. Gómez Robledo (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a great honour for Mexico to participate in this meeting to assess progress in the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, which has seen the significant participation of young people from around the world. It would difficult to imagine implementing the World Programme of Action or achieving the Millennium Development Goals without the participation of young people. These meetings have shown that.

Mexico associates itself with the statement made by the delegation of Argentina on behalf of the Rio Group. We shall take this opportunity to share some of our experiences with implementation of the World Programme of Action.

Following the Programme's adoption, the bodies responsible for formulating and implementing Mexico's youth policies underwent a profound change. The Government formulated a youth strategy based on a recognition of the importance of the needs of youth, in particular economic issues, social inclusion, equity and respect for the diversity of youth, and affirming the principle of the full participation of youth in decision-making.

In accordance with that vision, the Mexican Youth Institute was created as a governmental body charged with designing and implementing a national policy for the full integration of youth in the country's development. With the Institute's coordination, the first national youth programme was established, its is a combined effort among young people, society and the Government. The national youth programme has three key goals: to promote the enhancement of the quality of life and well-being of young people, to generate areas of opportunity for the development of collective and individual abilities and to create equitable conditions for marginalized youth.

The participation of young people is a component of the national youth programme, because of their capacity for action and because such participation is needed for an effective assessment of their situation, as they are actors in national development. Recognizing the importance of their participation, the programme also aims to create conditions in which young people can engage in development activities, taking into consideration the country's varied conditions and pluralism.

The Mexican Youth Institute's various programmes seek to fully integrate young people into public life. Through dialogue mechanisms with a variety of sectors, the Institute promotes conditions for young people's access to opportunities for comprehensive development, the enhancement of quality of life and more complete participation in areas related to their aspirations and demands. In that way, the programmes have helped develop the participation of young people in civic life and promote a positive vision of youth, which, in turn, enables them to achieve better social integration.

Through that formula of dialogue and participation, the youth of Mexico have been made aware that Government stands by their side. The Government of the Republic consults them on the formulation of policies of concern to youth, such as those related to the implementation of the World Programme of Action. Our legislature recently held a first Model United Nations in the Congress. It brought together young people from all over the country and provided a valuable forum for understanding their concerns on important issues.

That effort is also reflected in the inclusion today, for the first time, of two young people in the delegation

of Mexico for this session of the General Assembly, which is a source of great satisfaction. Let us hope that this is only the beginning of an ongoing practice.

The new generation of Mexican youth is aware of the varied and multicultural nature of Mexican society. The Government is committed to implementing the World Programme of Action. Our progress in the 10 priority areas of the Programme has been shared with other countries of our region and was presented as a contribution to the report of the Secretary-General (*A/60/61*).

We support the inclusion of the five additional priority areas set out in draft resolution A/60/L.2. We are committed to continue taking the relevant measures to assess the situation of youth with respect to those areas and taking the corresponding action.

Mr. Samkharadze (Georgia): First, I would like to express my gratitude to the United Nations, the world's most important organization, and to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for giving young people of many countries the opportunity to speak before the Assembly on youth problems and how to solve them.

The Anti-drug Society, of which I am President, is a non-governmental organization in Georgia that has been fighting drugs since 1999. Student organizations from various institutions of higher education have joined our young anti-narcotics coalition. Working jointly, we are trying to crack down on the problem by arranging seminars, exhibitions and sports events.

I would like to draw the attention of the Assembly to several issues of concern to the peoples of the world, especially young people.

Today we are witnessing a critical trend: the number of young drug addicts is increasing rapidly. This is becoming a global problem with terrible consequences, because most drug addicts become socially unstable and often turn to crime. Unfortunately, such young people are not willing, nor do they have ability, to become full members of society or to be useful to it. We can even say that they are being lost as individuals and lost as citizens.

Narcotics and terrorism are interrelated, because narcotics are the main source of financing for terrorism. Also important is the harm done to economies, as countries are incurring losses of billions of dollars. Unfortunately, drug addicts often do not know that the money they pay for another dose of narcotics helps terrorists buy ultra-modern weapons and ammunition. In my opinion, this important aspect of the question merits particular attention. That money helps many terrorist organizations worldwide and enables terrorists to commit terrible acts almost every day, the world over. We young people must see that our peers think about this.

The ecological damage that the world is facing is no less important. Hundreds of thousands of acres of forests are cut down to produce drugs. Various chemicals and other dangerous substances from illegal laboratories are polluting lakes, rivers and seas and are harming both flora and fauna.

Another factor is psychological damage. Of course, this is by no means a complete list, but each of those issues includes elements with the potential for causing a major disaster. I think that this is an inarguable fact.

Political, economic, psychological and social sciences have given us a broad range of knowledge over the ages. It is important to organize the information into a kind of system and to analyse it properly. Only in that way will we be able to understand the facts.

The twenty-first century is a time of integrated thinking. I should like to take this unique opportunity to recall the events of 11 September 2001. I still cannot find a suitable definition for that destructive event, and I think I never will. One thing is obvious: an evil was done that cannot be undone.

In my opinion, the attack of 11 September was not just an attack on a particular building, country or people. It was an attack on the idea of democracy itself.

I want to address the youth of the world and ask them to unite in a resolute fight against drug addiction. We must not feed the monster which threatens us with destruction. We must explain the unpleasant truth to our peers: that with the money paid for each dose of drugs, which adds up to hundreds of billions of dollars throughout the world, terrorists do not build shelters for homeless children, hospitals or houses of worship; they use that money for their sick, vandalistic aims.

I am asking the Assembly to unite in the fight against drug addiction. We do not want the future to be in the hands of unstable individuals, which would be a

catastrophe and jeopardize the stability and the democratic development of humankind.

Ms. Amati (San Marino): "Youth is our future". I decided to begin my brief statement with this motto because I believe that these four words sum up what the Republic of San Marino, together with the United Nations, believes.

The world we live in has changed completely in recent decades, as we have achieved the important goal of globalization. My generation is particularly fortunate, because we have a chance to relate to other young people from all over the world. We can share our culture with them, and at the same time we get to learn about theirs.

I am very glad to have the chance to attend today's plenary meeting, dedicated to us, the youth of the world. The United Nations is the arena where we can best discuss our future.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan has stated that education is a human right. We could not agree more. The importance of education is multifaceted; it is the foundation of a more advanced and developed society.

One of most important actions we can take in favour of young people and of the advancement of our societies is to give our young people a good, sound education which will serve them well in future.

The Republic of San Marino believes that education must have first place on our scale of priorities. In order to provide a good education to young citizens, our Government not only invests economic resources in education but provides honour students with financial aid.

Education is based on both study and culture. Culture is what one gets from one's family, what one learns in one's country and from one's country; basically, it is one's history; everyone has his or her own.

In our culture, in San Marino, the family plays a key role in forming new generations. The relationship between young family members and their elders is very strong and allows young people to learn, from childhood on, valuable lessons about aspects of their background — lessons that will help them in future.

That is why I would like to encourage everyone present today to re-evaluate the needs of young people and to consider what their elders can give to them.

The Acting President: Brief, to the point and beautiful, like San Marino.

Mr. Rustom (Syrian Arab Republic): I should like to shed some light on the status of Syrian young people and on the challenges facing them in the third millennium.

Syria has a very young population; young people aged 15 to 25 constitute about 25 per cent of the total population. Moreover, the relatively high population growth rate — 24.5 births per 1,000 — is leading to an increase in the number of young people as a percentage of the total population. Furthermore, the number of students has increased, leading to higher public expenditures in the area of education, from 7.6 per cent in 1983 to 15 per cent in 2002.

This large number of young people is a great asset to the nation, but it also creates a number of challenges, which the Government has worked hard to face.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has consistently focused on education. It has ensured education for all by making it compulsory and free. Educational curricula are revised and modified regularly. For instance, counselling has been included in the educational curriculum since 2001, as well as foreign languages and information technology. In order to eradicate the stereotyped image of women, curricula were modified to include new concepts, such as gender equality. In addition, Syria has provided the necessary infrastructure to expand Internet service country-wide in order to encourage distance learning.

In the field of information technology (IT) and communications, Syria has developed a strategy for the relevant technologies. In that connection, many mechanisms have been put in place, such as the Syrian Higher Education and Research Network and, in 2002, the Virtual Learning University. Moreover, in 2004, ReefNet was launched in three villages through cooperation between the Ministry of Communications and Technology and the United Nations Development Programme.

The Ministry of Health, in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO), launched the Adolescent Health Programme in 2002, which targets the 10-19 age group, about 4.5 million inhabitants. The Programme aims to promote adolescent health standards through health education on health-related

issues in general, and on reproductive health in particular.

As for youth and HIV/AIDS, the Ministry of Health has adopted the National Programme for AIDS Control, which puts in place measures to prevent HIV infection and sexually transmitted diseases. Statistics reveal that the number of patients with HIV/AIDS reached 272 in 2002.

Drug abuse is not widespread among Syrian young people. The rate of addiction among the total population is 127 per million, and the incidence among young people under the age of 18 is even smaller. That is due to many factors — religious, social, familial and moral.

With regard to tobacco control, Syria ratified the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in 2003. The average number of cigarettes smoked by young people in Syria is about 3 per day.

Syria recently became a State party to the Youth Employment Network. The Syrian strategy on the employment of youth is going to be managed and implemented at all stages through community interaction, including partners from all sectors — the public, private and civil society. That strategy, which targets young people aged 18 to 25, aims to rehabilitate, qualify, train, and, subsequently, help young people to enter the labour market.

Syria has oriented all its development plans towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

With regard to young people and work in the private sector, many projects have been established, including the BIDAYA programme, whose mission is to work with young people and provide access to financial support for those with a viable business proposition who are unable to find help elsewhere. The word "bidaya" means "beginning" in Arabic. It is also an acronym for "Boosting and Inspiring Dynamic Youth Achievement". The programme will provide successful applicants with volunteer business mentors and full access to the organization's local and national business support network.

Another programme for young people, the Syrian Young Entrepreneurs' Association, was the brainchild of enthusiastic and dedicated young businesspeople who felt that they should make a contribution to the enhancement of the country's business community by tapping the resources of its most dynamic constituents, young people. The Syrian Young Entrepreneurs' Association is a non-governmental non-profit organization that strives to inspire a strong entrepreneurial mindset and skills among Syria's promising young people. It aims to enhance their professional and personal competencies in the national and global economy. Moreover, the programme seeks to provide a clearinghouse for local and expatriate experiences, thereby ensuring a prosperous future for Syria.

Syria's juvenile delinquency law of 1974 considers delinquent juveniles to be victims. In 2004, the Ministry of the Interior, in cooperation with UNICEF, held three training workshops for officers and agents of the criminal security service and the police force on how to interrogate and deal with juveniles.

Finally, I would like to refer to the role of the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs and its contribution to the welfare of young people. The Commission has shouldered the responsibility for developing the Syrian Arab Republic's national strategy for young people, by, inter alia, establishing the Youth National Committee, whose members represent all the ministries and State institutions working on youth-related issues, in addition to non-governmental organizations and programmes focusing on young people. In general, when performing its tasks the Commission takes into consideration issues related to gender, people with special needs and refugees.

Finally, I would like to express our appreciation for the initiative taken by the United Nations to listen to the voices of Member States' young people, as well as to improve its plans to secure a better future for humankind.

Mr. Atsou (Togo) (*spoke in French*): It is an honour for me to speak on behalf of roughly half of the five million inhabitants of Togo, who are young people, in order to convey to the General Assembly the efforts Togo has made to implement the World Programme of Action for Youth.

Allow me to welcome the presence among us of other delegations, as well as the ongoing efforts they are making to ensure that young people are able to participate in society.

Following summit-level conferences organized by the United Nations, humankind has become aware of the need to address the issue of development comprehensively. Greater consideration of the matter has made it possible for us to understand the role and invaluable contribution of young people in the process of building a global economy that meets the needs of all, as well as their capacity and willingness to contribute to the lives of their societies. The world as a whole has also become aware of the risks to which young people are exposed.

The Millennium Declaration and the World Programme of Action for Youth, which was adopted by Member States 10 years ago, are the results of that awareness. Those tools were conceived with the goal of ameliorating the difficult problems that rob young people of any chance for development, namely, hunger, poverty, unemployment, juvenile delinquency, drug addiction, HIV/AIDS, gender-based discrimination, conflict and marginalization. Those obstacles, among others, have impeded us from attaining the desired results. With regard to Togo, there are two main reasons for the lack of progress in implementing the commitments of the World Programme of Action for Youth.

On the one hand, despite the Government's good will and that of young people's groups and other actors, the lack of financial resources — a characteristic of most developing States — has been the major limitation to every policy aimed at improving the living standards of young people. Moreover, Togo has suffered for more than 13 years — and continues to suffer today — from the breakdown in assistance from its main development partners.

On the other hand, in the context of an unfavourable economic environment, the structural adjustment measures recommended by the Bretton Woods institutions have contributed to a suspension of recruitment in the public sector. Adding to that the low rate at which the private sector is able to absorb young people seeking work and the political crisis in the country, it is easy to understand why Togo's young people are facing the problems of unemployment, poverty and the other scourges I have mentioned. Nevertheless, Togo's young people are today pleased to see that all indicators point to a promising new future.

President Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé has placed the problems of young people at the centre of his programme to structure society on the basis of 20 commitments. Providing decent employment for young people, extending credit to young entrepreneurs, giving universities the logistical and human resources needed to provide good training for young people, and full and effective participation by youth in the political, economic and social life of the country, are among the main policies of the programme established by Togo's President.

The Government's meaningful policy of according close attention to the problems of young people has led to the establishment of the first-ever State secretariat devoted solely to improving conditions for young people. This is a tool that henceforth will make it possible for us to be the leading actors in the transformation of society. In addition, the programme of action put forth by the National Union Government, which was made public on 4 July 2005, sends a strong signal testifying to the resolute determination of the Government of Togo to place the improvement of the living conditions of its young people at the centre of its concerns.

Less than 100 days since the establishment of the National Union Government, the hopes aroused by that event have already been justified vis-à-vis the 10 priority areas targeted by the World Programme of Action for Youth. In the interests of time, I shall limit myself to pointing out only some of the efforts undertaken in a few areas.

With regard to education, the section in the Government of Togo's programme of action devoted to social development includes significant steps that should guarantee a quality education for all of Togo's young people. Special emphasis has been placed on the situation of teachers, who are mostly young people themselves. The Government has committed itself to ensure quality education, not only by giving teachers appropriate quality training, but also by providing them working conditions conducive to giving young pupils sound instruction and providing free primary education in order to reach the goal of ensuring schooling for all by 2015. For their part, students will be encouraged to excel by the granting of prizes.

In the areas of employment, poverty and hunger, the Government of Togo has taken several steps by which young people will become the most important stakeholders in the building of the Togolese economy. In that connection, the Prime Minister stated that Togo

would do everything necessary with regard to employment in order to ensure that the greatest number of young people possible will be able to benefit from employment as soon as possible. They will be the first beneficiaries of the employment and self-employment programme to be established by the Government. They will also be active participants in the reconstruction and consolidation work we are going to undertake.

Putting the Government's words into action, only some 45 days following the unveiling of its programme, a first wave of 1,700 young teachers were recruited into the civil service. That will be followed by a second wave in the weeks to come.

The provision of grants to young people, which was also announced in the programme, will allow us to promote self-employment through the establishment of small- and medium-sized business. That will make it possible to reduce considerably the number of the unemployed, thereby also addressing the complicated issue of poverty. For their part, young people's groups and non-governmental organizations (NGO) working in Togo will also contribute to the extent they are able.

In that connection, I would like to commend the efforts of NGOs to halt the social crisis. Despite that, however, their efforts to improve the living conditions of young people through sustainable development have been very limited for many years.

We would therefore like to use the forum provided by the General Assembly to launch, on behalf of Togo's young people, a resounding and solemn appeal aimed at all organizations, associations and other development partners to trust our country and to extend their assistance to our young people, as well as to our Government and our NGOs, in order that we may overcome the challenges of poverty and hunger and the other scourges that particularly afflict young people.

Mr. Ampem (Ghana): May I express my gratitude for the opportunity to address the General Assembly on behalf of the young people of Ghana. May I also congratulate the United Nations on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond and on the successes in overcoming the challenges regarding its implementation thus far.

Ghana as a country has drawn much inspiration from the World Programme of Action for Youth since its adoption in 1995, and has been taking bold steps towards the development of Ghanaian young people. A revised national youth policy, which was developed on the basis of the 10 priority areas identified in the World Programme of Action for Youth, is under active consideration. Youth organizations under the coordination of the Ghana National Youth Council have also developed a national youth charter to express our priorities as Ghanaian young people. It should be given attention by all.

In order to further reduce unemployment among young people in the country, the Government has established the National Youth Fund, which is aimed at assisting the country's young people with funding to establish small-scale enterprises.

Another modest achievement thus far worth mentioning is the introduction of free primary education in the country, which we hope will increase enrolment.

Like many others in the African region, but unlike their counterparts in developed countries, Ghanaian young people benefit the least from today's globalization. Issues regarding unfair trade and competition must be seriously addressed if we are genuinely committed to the full integration of the world's economies and societies, as defined by the World Programme of Action for Youth.

We also ask for well-coordinated and intensive exchange programmes between young people's organizations in the North and the South in order to facilitate the exchange of ideas and the spread of innovation. May I take this opportunity to commend the National Council of Swedish Youth Organizations (LSU) for taking a bold initiative in that regard. A case in point is the cooperation between the LSU and the National Union of Ghana Students.

Ghana strongly supports the call for youth-led development, but would like to advise that we not lose sight of the need to tap the rich experiences gained by older generations over the years. There should be a blend of youthful zeal and the experiences of older persons.

It is gratifying to note that the international community is committed to solving the problem of youth unemployment in the world. We wish to propose that we ensure that the lion's share of the resources meant to achieve that are directed to regions of the

world where there is a larger percentage of young people — such as Asia and Africa — and where youth unemployment is also the highest.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize that the successful implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth and the Millennium Development Goals will depend to a large extent upon the vibrancy of our civil societies. Developing nations must therefore be encouraged and assisted to develop their civil societies and non-governmental organizations, particularly those related to youth development.

Ms. Al-Hajri (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to express to the President the gratitude of the delegation of Qatar for having organized this tenth anniversary meeting on the World Programme of Action for Youth for the Year 2000 and Beyond, as well as on the Millennium Development Goals that were adopted after the Programme. Efforts have been made at the regional, national and international levels; however, there is still much to be done to reach the Programme's goals.

The report of the Secretary-General entitled "World Youth Report 2005" (*A/60/61*) presents the issues and invites us to work hard to find expeditious and appropriate solutions. The report states that there are over 720 million young people living on two dollars a day or less. Many must also deal with drug problems and diseases such as AIDS. The gap between young people in developed and developing countries is very wide. We must try to bridge that gap, especially as regards the areas of educational technology and development, given their effects on young people.

The State of Qatar has been working on all levels to ensure a prosperous future for young people. Our official efforts, as well as those of the private sector and civil society institutions, have been geared towards improving the lives of young people. Our Supreme Council for Family Affairs, in particular the Department for Youth, has developed a national strategy for youth.

Education in Qatar is guaranteed to all students, and it is compulsory at the primary and secondary levels. We are now focusing our efforts on providing high quality education at all stages, especially at the university level. We have established an education city, where our major universities operate branches. We have also focused our efforts on establishing scientific research centres. We have set up centres open to students at all levels, where students practice elections and learn about democracy. We have also integrated disabled persons into teaching programmes.

In order to create employment opportunities, there is coordination between the Government and the private sector to employ young people.

Given that the scourge of drugs is an international phenomenon, we have worked to protect young people from the dangers of drugs. We have also worked with international institutions to cooperate in this area. Our Supreme Council for Family Affairs is working with the Centro Italiano di Solidaritá and with United Nations bodies to create opportunities for young people.

The efforts of the State of Qatar are not limited to its own young people. We have also worked with international organizations to help friendly and fraternal countries. That work includes a project under the auspices of the spouse of His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani and in cooperation with UNESCO to assist Iraqi universities. Qatar has allocated $15 million for that purpose.

Our universities are also open to all young people from around the world.

We must make every effort to ensure a prosperous future for young people everywhere. The United Nations system should contribute advisory and training services to improve the capacities of our young people.

Mr. Al-Ghannam (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the young people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, I would like to thank the Secretariat for organizing this international debate to assess the progress made in the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth and to provide an opportunity for young people to raise questions with regard to their prospects and aspirations, as well as to take part in the search for solutions.

Allow me to draw the Assembly's attention to a signal and very positive pioneering experience of Saudi young people — who make up more than two thirds of Saudi society — that took place under the auspices of the King Abdul Aziz Centre for National Dialogue.

That Centre works to foster a culture of dialogue in society that discusses issues of national interest at all levels and proposes recommendations for action.

The Centre has made issues impacting young people a national priority.

A national meeting was held in Saudi Arabia under the theme "Questions of youth: realities and aspirations". Twenty-six preparatory workshops were held prior to the meeting, in which 650 young men and women participated, representing young people aged 16 to 25 in groups of 25 men and 25 women from each province. The goals of the workshops were to promote dialogue among young people, identify and discuss issues and ideas specific to them and, lastly, to consider proposals and work programmes to be submitted to decision-makers. Many people took part in those workshops, including scientists, intellectual and educated people of both genders and a great number of young men and women. Saudis participating in the workshops had an opportunity to ask many questions and to discuss issues of interest, including continuation of constructive dialogue.

In conclusion, those efforts have begun to bear fruit. They represent an initiative that is led by Saudi Arabia's young people themselves. They are our hope and we rely heavily on them.

Mr. Treminio Rivera (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to say that I share the pain of the people and Government of El Salvador in connection with the difficulties caused by the hurricane. I hope that they will be able to overcome those problems.

Nicaragua is not only a country of lakes and volcanoes; it is also a country full of young people. Over 70 per cent of the population of Nicaragua is under the age of 30. The group of those aged 18 to 30 now represents 23 per cent of the population. However, by 2015 that group will double to make up 47 per cent of the population, and the group of those aged 0 to 15, which now makes up 46.5 per cent, will shrink by half. That means that the Government of Nicaragua should invest in young people today more than ever before. However, doing so would clearly not be just for the sake of providing replacements for the workforce. It would also be to try to ensure that Nicaraguan young people can become more independent, develop their capacities and enjoy a higher level of participation in society.

When we began to draft social policy for young people in Nicaragua, we tried to ensure that we did so while making those policies part of other national social policies and, ultimately, overall State policy.

Allow me to touch on the positive and negative aspects of the situation of young people in Nicaragua in recent years. Young people in Nicaragua lived through a war in which more than 50,000 of them died. Today, as before, we continue to have many problems.

The very high rate of teen pregnancy has resulted in an equally high maternal mortality rate among young women. People of working age in the 25-to-49-year age bracket have only 7.1 years of schooling on average — that is to say, they do not even have the 12 years of schooling normally recommended by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Adolescents have on average 5.1 years of schooling. Thus, given the situation facing young Nicaraguans, the Government of Nicaragua has over the past three and half years developed a youth action programme aimed at addressing those problems. It is endeavouring to elaborate future policies to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS, and it will work with the Ministry of Health to see to it that people living with HIV/AIDS have access to antiretroviral treatment. The Ministry of Education also must undertake training and educational projects aimed at limiting the pandemic.

Next year we will be carrying out the first youth survey, which will give us an initial baseline as to the actual situation of youth and thereby help us adapt our intervention planning aimed at young people.

Access to information and telecommunications technologies is also a challenge for our Government. That is why we have begun to develop neighbourhood telecommunications centres, thereby narrowing the information gap between young people who have access to such information and those who do not.

No less important are sex education programmes, aimed at reducing the number of teen pregnancies and at bringing the Nicaraguan people, especially young people, to a point where the demographic growth rate is lower than the rate of economic growth.

Clearly, however, none of the efforts being made by the Government of Nicaragua will come to fruition if we cannot resolve the structural problems facing our country and developing countries in particular. One important challenge is to reduce external debt with respect to bilateral agencies and to certain countries. Another important goal is to ensure sustainable economic growth over the next 25 years at an annual rate of 7 per cent, which will enable us to implement

state policies that will well and truly resolve the problems facing Nicaragua's young people.

I should like to join those who have expressed their congratulations to the Ibero-American Youth Organization. Indeed, on 10 and 11 October, we will be signing the Convention on the Rights of Young People in Latin America in Badajoz, Spain.

I should like to conclude my statement with some thoughts that summarize what youth, and education for youth, means to my Government:

> "If your projects are for one year, plant seeds. If they are for 10 years, plant a tree. If your projects are for 100 years, then educate the people. That is because if you plant seeds, you will get one crop. If you plant a tree, you will get 10. But if you educate the people, you will have crops forever."

The Acting President: I should like to inform the Assembly that the representative of Haiti has asked to participate in this meeting. Inasmuch as the list of speakers was closed at 11 a.m. today, may I ask the Assembly whether there is any objection to this inclusion of that delegation in the list of speakers.

I see no objection.

Ms. Louis (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): When I learned that I had been appointed by the Secretary of State for Youth to represent Haitian youth at the General Assembly, I hesitated, because on the one hand I know how complex and multifaceted the needs of youth are, and, on the other, I was unsure about the follow-up to such an event. But, aware that this is an appropriate forum for voicing the claims of our young people, we have come here in the hope that they will be heard and taken into account.

Haitian youth is living and developing in an environment of constant deterioration. It is deprived of all socio-economic and institutional opportunities, and it cannot flourish at the cultural level. Infrastructure for education, health care, professional training, public hygiene and recreation is lacking, which hinders the development of the collective social conscience that is necessary if we are to transform the existing socio-economic structure into a modern and effective production mechanism.

Despite our Government's efforts vis-à-vis Haitian youth, we have been unable to devise a policy aimed at promoting the physical and intellectual development of young people — even less so with regard to socio-professional development, which could promote a transition to independence.

Ten years after the elaboration of the Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, and despite the many recommendations made for youth, the situation of young Haitians has not improved. For several decades now, the number of young people in Haiti has been growing. Demographically speaking, it is clear that they now represent a significant percentage of our population. In 1997, those aged 15 to 24 years represented 30 per cent of the population. As the growth rate is nearly 2 per cent annually, just imagine what the employment situation is today.

According to a 1995 United Nations Development Programme report, the unemployment rate was then at 65 per cent. The socio-political crisis, which grew worse in 2002, is affecting various sectors of the economy and is having a devastating impact on social indicators. We believe that unemployment will continue so long as the political crisis is not resolved and so long as there is not greater involvement on the part of young people in the context of a national youth policy that takes account of the Millennium Development Goals and of the actual needs of youth.

HIV/AIDS is one of the greatest challenges of the twenty-first century. As in the rest of the world, it is having major repercussions for Haitian youth. The most affected are young people aged 15 to 24, and those figures are continuing to rise. The situation is having a negative impact on the development process in the country. Furthermore, young people who are trying to protect themselves from possible HIV/AIDS infection are having a difficult time getting access to information, counselling, screening and treatment.

In the light of those conditions, it is evident that the limited labour market has no place for urban or rural youth. That largely explains the phenomenon of boat people prevalent among young people. Young people are driven to migrate. They take to the seas on flimsy watercraft in search of new horizons. Among them are young people from rural areas who do not have access to education or plots of land and others who had bad luck on their high school exams, along with all other types of young people, coming from all over the country in search of better economic prospects. The great majority of those potential

immigrants end up living in the shanty towns of Port-au-Prince, where they become involved in criminal activity and are used to foment the climate of insecurity that has existed in the country for several years, since the departure of former President Aristide.

With regard to unemployment and the precariousness of education and social life, Haitian youth are now considering the best type of programme to adopt for our circumstances. One thing is certain: the policies proposed for industrialized countries are not applicable in our situation. We therefore propose that the United Nations support our Government in the following manner.

Studies should be designed and carried out on the socio-economic situation of young people in order to create programmes that take their real needs into account. The international community should support the Government of Haiti in implementing a programme for the social, cultural and intellectual development of young people. A space should be created within the United Nations for youth representatives from various countries to meet and discuss their problems and the solutions. In Haiti, the Secretary of State for Youth should be replaced with a Ministry for Youth in order to make actions for youth more effective. I hope those recommendations will receive consideration.

Mr. Matlosa (Lesotho): I am honoured to have this opportunity to address the Assembly.

Lesotho is one of the poorest nations in the world and has the third highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in the world. The epidemic's magnitude threatens the very existence of our nation and makes the fight to carry out the World Programme of Action for Youth all the more difficult, if not outright impossible. Youth must wage war against the epidemic, but that war will be unlike any other war that youth have fought before. The enemy has crept unnoticed into communities and households, and the silent killer is waging war from within.

Through the World Programme of Action for Youth, the United Nations must urgently elaborate a strategy for its battle plan, seek the assistance of allies, recruit, train and equip troops and allocate enough resources to engage and destroy the enemy. The United Nations remains our strongest ally in this war. It should also allocate more resources to that war and remain determined in helping youth emerge victorious.

From my statement, it is clear that HIV/AIDS is one of the biggest obstacles to achieving our goals in the World Programme of Action for Youth, as well as the overall development of the youth. While Lesotho has made tremendous progress in its efforts to provide the fundamental elements needed to improve livelihoods, young people face considerable development challenges, primarily due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In a country with one of the highest infection rates, now estimated at approximately 30 per cent, the youth of Lesotho are facing an unprecedented challenge. The pandemic, combined with deep-rooted poverty and food insecurity, is causing a new kind of vulnerability, affecting almost every young person in Lesotho. The consequence is a gradual undermining of the social and economic fabric that makes up the society of Lesotho. The pandemic has a great effect on youth, weakening family and social coping mechanisms.

Youth are in crisis. That complex crisis can be seen in its negative impact on youth development, and in particular on the realization of the World Programme of Action for Youth. However, the socio-political climate now prevailing in most developing countries provides a real opportunity to effectively address youth development challenges such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic, poverty and hunger, unemployment, globalization and gender equality.

For us in the developing countries, the idea of achieving the goals of the World Programme of Action for Youth is just a dream. Our dream can be made a reality through further support and investment from the United Nations and developed countries.

Today, we young people live in a world that you adults and our forefathers have made. Tomorrow, you will live in a world that we will make. When you make decisions, think of the world in which you would like to live in the future. Our crisis can be turned into an opportunity. Young people, let us all rally to the battle cry and make a difference.

The Acting President: I now call on the observer of the Observer State of the Holy See.

Mr. Dionisio (Holy See): My delegation is pleased to participate in this important discussion on the World Programme of Action for Youth. It was once said, flippantly, that youth is wasted on the young. Nevertheless, the Holy See is pleased that the United

Nations continues to have high regard for the importance of young people.

Recently, at a gathering of hundreds of thousands of young people in Cologne, Germany, Pope Benedict XVI echoed the sentiments of young people around the world when he said, "We are concerned for the state of the world and we are asking, 'where do I find standards to live by and what are the criteria that govern responsible cooperation in building the present and the future of our world?'"

Young people aspire to be great. But to achieve greatness, they must be mindful of others, especially those in need. Nor can they achieve greatness alone. They need the leadership and the resources of Governments, the interest and the cooperation of non-governmental organizations and the goodwill and hard work of all people.

In the light of that concern, my delegation has carefully followed developments since the launch 10 years ago of the World Programme of Action for Youth. Its 10 priority areas for action touched upon significant issues and themes that affect the lives of young people and our world.

The Secretary-General's World Youth Report 2005 (*A/60/61*) returns to troubling elements that still affect young people's lives today. Addressing one of those concerns, my delegation reaffirms its position on the use of the expression "sexual and reproductive health", as contained in the report. My delegation understands the concept as the holistic promotion of the health of women, men, youth and children. It does not consider abortion or access to abortion to be a dimension of that term.

The Holy See also continues to be fully committed to the role of youth in the context of the global economy, poverty, education and employment. There are currently more than 196,000 Catholic primary and secondary schools worldwide, attended by more than 51 million children and young people. Furthermore, there are almost 1,000 Catholic universities, colleges and other institutes, educating more than 4 million young adults. Young people are being helped to receive the education they deserve and are encouraged to give back to others. Education is the gift that continues to give.

The President returned to the Chair.

With respect to youth in relation to society, the environment, leisure and participation, the Catholic Church, through the activities of thousands of youth groups throughout the world, promotes the importance of caring for oneself, for the environment and for one's peers.

Almost 12,000 Catholic hospitals and other health-care and preventive medicine institutions throughout the world are working to address problems related to youth at risk, including health issues, drugs, delinquency and discrimination against girls and young women. Trained local professionals working in such institutions support the principle that all human life is sacred, and that each person has worth. The young are cared for as precious and vulnerable members of society.

The ability to accomplish specific goals in the 10 priority areas comes down to commitment. The round-table discussions on young people called it "making commitments that matter". We know that we live in a complex and complicated world, and many young people know that such a commitment requires three things: recognizing needs, especially in the poorest countries of our world; planning a response; and following through.

The Holy See encourages the United Nations to continue to identify the needs of the world's young people, especially the poorest and weakest of them. It further recommits itself to working together with the international community to develop realistic, appropriate, immediate and long-term responses. Building a better world is a lifelong process. Oftentimes, it is a very long journey. But young people recognize that their journey is just beginning. And, precisely because they are young, they are still at the initial stages of paving a path for success in the future.

Every person of every age matters as we work together to build a world in which young people can feel safe and happy.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 3369 (XXX) of 10 October 1975, I call on the observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Mr. Husain (Organization of the Islamic Conference): It is a privilege for me to address the General Assembly on the occasion of its review of the progress made in the implementation of the World

Programme of Action for Youth, which the Assembly adopted 10 years ago.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) expresses its full support for the initiatives being undertaken by Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations worldwide for the observance of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth. In doing so, we recall with pride and pleasure the role and active participation of OIC member States in the drafting and adoption of the Programme of Action and in its implementation at the national, regional and global levels.

The results of those planned endeavours are now before us, meticulously detailed in the Secretary-General's report (*A/60/61*) and described in our debate by speakers from all over the world, including from OIC member States.

What is emerging from this invaluable interchange of ideas and experiences is the fact that, while advances have been made to varying degrees in the 10 priority areas on which the Programme of Action focuses, the expectations raised in 1995 have not been met. In 2005, over 200 million young people are living in poverty; 130 million are illiterate; 88 million are unemployed; and — something that was not, perhaps, fully foreseen 10 years ago — 10 million young people are now living with HIV/AIDS.

We have no option but to share the Secretary-General's view that, given such stark and startling realities, the case for renewing our commitment to the goals of the World Programme of Action could not be clearer. In fact, there is a stronger case now for augmenting the 10 priority issues of 1995 by another five, as identified in the World Youth Report 2003 (*E/CN.5/2003/4*), and subsequently noted by the Assembly in resolution 58/133.

We would like to take this opportunity to bring to the Assembly's attention some of the developments that are under way in the OIC in support of the interests of youth. First, the Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation has been established. The Forum, whose headquarters are in Istanbul, will, among other things, become a credible source of information and advice on national youth policy issues, coordinate the activities of national youth organizations in OIC member States and Muslim communities in non-member States, and assist with capacity-building measures, including the training of youth leaders in advocacy and organizational roles.

Those two examples should give representatives a sense of the OIC's commitment to the welfare and development of youth. Those commitments do not exist in isolation, but reflect the emphasis placed by our organization on the promotion of Islamic family values and, in that context, on efforts to address the needs of the various elements of the family, including men, women, children and youth.

In conclusion, we believe that, with renewed strength, the family — the basic social unit of society — should provide the tools for the development of a morally upright and economically stable, healthy and viable society. It should also create an environment for harmonious and productive lives to be lived by all members of the human family, including youth, on whose shoulders will fall the responsibility of creating the global village, which is our destination in the new millennium, which we recently entered.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate at this meeting devoted to the evaluation of the progress made in the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/60/L.2, entitled "Policies and programmes involving youth", as orally revised.

The list of additional sponsors — like the original list of sponsors — is impressive. The following countries have added their names to the list of sponsors of draft resolution A/60/L.2: Algeria, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, China, the Congo, Djibouti, Fiji, Gabon, Israel, Jamaica, Malawi, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone, Ukraine and the United Republic of Tanzania.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/60/L.2, as orally revised?

Draft resolution A/60/L.2, as orally revised, was adopted (resolution 60/2).

The President: Before giving the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, who wishes to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote or position are limited to 10

minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. García-Matos (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela wishes to express its strong reservation with regard to paragraph 7 of draft resolution A/60/L.2. We totally disagree with the contents of that paragraph, which mentions the outcome document (*resolution 60/1*) of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. We consider that document to be null and void and as having no effect for the Republic.

The President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of position.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Shestack (United States of America): The United States is exercising its right of reply in response to the statement made this morning by the representative of Cuba.

The United States trade embargo against Cuba is a bilateral issue that should not come before the General Assembly. In bringing attention to that issue, Cuba is simply attempting to blame the communist regime's failed economic policies on the United States and to divert attention from its human rights record.

Let us remember that the United States is the single largest source of humanitarian assistance to Cuba. Let there be no doubt: if Cubans are jobless or hungry, it is because of the failings of the current Government. That Government has shown no interest whatsoever in implementing any economic or political reform that would lead to democratic change and a free-market economy. That kind of economic mismanagement is the reason why a country that 45 years ago had a per capita income equal to that of Spain is now one of Latin America's most economically desperate.

The Cuban Government is not a victim, as it contends. Rather, it is a tyrant aggressively punishing anyone who dares to have a differing opinion. Castro has steadfastly refused to allow any kind of political opening, and he continues to deny Cubans human rights and fundamental freedoms as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We, for one, cannot support an economic opening with a country with such an abysmal record on economic and political issues.

Ms. Thomas (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba is not trying to blame the United States. Actually, the United States is only blaming itself; it does not need our help. It is blaming itself by not complying with the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly over the past 13 years calling for a lifting of the blockade. It is blaming itself when it adopts extraterritorial laws against Cuba hardening the blockade even more and when it applies them so brutally.

The prosperous Cuba of before 1 January 1959 that the representative of the United States is talking about was a Cuba of 2 million illiterate people — 40 per cent of the population. It was a Cuba of half a million unschooled children, 10,000 unemployed schoolteachers and a jobless rate of 24 per cent, with young people the majority of the unemployed. It was a Cuba of drunken American marines on the streets of Havana, defiling our national monuments, and of Fulgencio Batista, killing and torturing students with the tacit complicity of American leaders.

The United States delegation is trying to convince those in this Hall that the blockade is nothing more than a Cuban excuse for our problems. It is trying to be my country's judge and prosecutor, using the argument that we supposedly lack democracy and violate human rights. Not only does it ignore Cuba's globally recognized progress in the social arena and in caring for young people and children, but it is lying once again to the members of the Assembly when it tries to present the economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba as a bilateral issue.

Only a racist, fascist, arrogant, haughty and, indeed, disturbed mentality such as that of the current President of the United States, Mr. Bush, could maintain the criminal blockade against Cuba. In practice, the blockade policy amounts to an actual economic war waged by the United States against my country for more than 40 years without any limits, whether ethical, moral or related to State obligations under international law governed by the United Nations.

Never has a country been subjected so continuously to the danger represented by such a

powerful neighbour, which, historically, has tried to dominate and annex us for more than two centuries. The United States has run out of pretexts for explaining the maintenance of the criminal blockade and other anti-Cuban measures. That is why it clings to the issue of our supposed violations of human rights. That is the fig leaf with which it covers itself.

The world knows that for the past 46 years, Cuba has been a thorn in the side of the world's only super-Power, the United States. When it becomes irritated, it sets in motion a campaign of disinformation, blackmail and pressure. However, the thorn — personified in Fidel Castro — remains intact and is increasingly robust.

Everyone here is aware that what the United States delegation is trying to do on behalf of its Government is to stigmatize Cuba for our unyielding rebellion against the unjust imperialist world order; for our staunch defence of our independence and sovereignty; for our decision to make our own way without accepting external interference; for the example set by our truly participatory and popular democracy; for the example set by our achievements, including our education and health rates, our full employment and our social justice for all, despite the cruel and prolonged blockade that our people have had for so long to endure; and for the example we set by providing solidarity and sharing what we have with those who have nothing in this world.

The Government of United States has not the slightest moral qualification to speak about Cuba or any other country represented in this Hall. The Government that is accusing Cuba today is the one that has sent thousands of its young people to die in wars launched under lying pretexts now internationally recognized as such. It is the Government that directed — indeed, participated in — the bombing of cities. The Government that is accusing Cuba today is the one that was unable to take measures in time to prevent the disaster caused in New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina.

In Cuba, we learned long ago to raise dignity as high as palm trees, and there will be no turning back. Cuba will not rest in its struggle, will not surrender, will never make concessions, will never fail to speak up. We will always stand alongside those who are not resigned, those who put their faith in the value of ideas and principles, those who do not give up the dream of achieving full justice for all in a better world.

The President: I should now like to say a few final words as President of the General Assembly.

Yesterday and today have been marked by a strong presence of both the present and the future in this Hall. I refer not only to those who are here representing youth organizations in their own countries, and, of course, to the representatives of Governments. In that regard, I particularly commend the delegation of Togo for its most faithful participation in the discussions. It is welcome to see so many participants still here at almost 7 p.m. That is a good sign, and I am grateful.

Participants have also brought to the United Nations the presence and situation of young people throughout the world, who are so vulnerable in conflicts, who are vulnerable to disease and who are exposed to poverty, at a time when so many moral excesses are making children victims, for example as child soldiers. We also face the trafficking of human beings, which is, as we know, a modern form of slavery.

We have brought into these rooms not only young people representing youth but also the realities of the situation of many young people in the world. This is important and indeed very rejuvenating for this Organization at a time of reform and looking to the future.

We need to strengthen multilateralism; we need to strengthen international cooperation; we need to strengthen international solidarity. Young people have a very important role to play in this regard. I hope that they will take back to their countries a message of international cooperation, a message of strengthening this Organization and a message of international solidarity. I also hope that they have created networks among themselves. Relations among human beings are extremely important, even in diplomacy. And I hope that this network will bring our young participants together even after they leave these halls.

With these words, I thank all participants for making this a very special two-day part of the General Assembly at the beginning of my presidency. I wish them a good return to their countries, countries that they have represented so well, and the best of luck for the future.

The General Assembly has thus concluded its meetings devoted to evaluation of the progress made in the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond and this stage of its consideration of agenda item 62.

Programme of work

The President: I should like to inform members that document A/INF/60/3/Rev.1, containing a revised programme of work and schedule of plenary meetings for the months of October, November and December, was issued this morning. May I remind members that the lists of speakers for items listed in document A/INF/60/3/Rev.1 are open.

In addition, I wish to announce the following activities. The 2005 United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities and the Pledging Conference for the World Food Programme will be held on Friday morning, 11 November. The announcement of voluntary contributions to the 2005 programmes of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East will take place on Monday morning, 5 December. Members are requested to consult the *Journal* for further details concerning those activities.

The meeting rose at 6.55 p.m.

United Nations A/60/PV.29

General Assembly
Sixtieth session

Official Records

29th plenary meeting
Monday, 10 October 2005, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Floods and mudslides in Central America and earthquake in South Asia

The President: I begin this morning by expressing our solidarity with the people of Pakistan and of its neighbours India and Afghanistan who have been tragically affected by a devastating earthquake this weekend. We have all been shocked by the news reports we have seen, with whole villages disappearing and massive numbers of people, including a tragic number of children, falling victim to this disaster.

On behalf of the General Assembly, I offer our deepest sympathy to the Governments and the peoples of the three countries and to the families and friends of those killed, injured or missing. All of us in the General Assembly stand shoulder to shoulder with them now as rescue and relief work continues. The world must also ensure that they receive the support and cooperation they need for the longer-term recovery and reconstruction that will be necessary.

The earthquake, along with the flooding and mudslides in Guatemala and its neighbours in Central America, namely, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua — which have also resulted in the tragic loss of many lives under horrible circumstances — remind us both of the power of nature and of the importance of a quick and coordinated international response at times such as this.

I now call on the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. A. A. Chaudhry (Pakistan): The earthquake that hit Pakistan on 8 October has caused tremendous loss of life and damage to infrastructure. The extent of the damage is still unfolding as rescue teams reach out to remote and inaccessible mountainous areas.

On behalf of the Government of Pakistan, I thank you, Mr. President, and all the Governments represented here for your kind words of sympathy and generous offers of assistance in this hour of national tragedy. Many Governments, international and non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies and bodies have offered to help. The Government of Pakistan appreciates and welcomes the international assistance.

The President: I now call on the representative of Guatemala.

Mr. Skinner-Klée (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to express my appreciation to you, Mr. President, and, through you, to all the delegations represented here, for the expression of solidarity extended to us at this time of sadness for my country.

The devastating effects of these natural disasters are directly related to the manner in which humankind interacts with nature. We cannot forget that link. But we also cannot forget our link with this House, which offered us prompt cooperation. We would like to thank the Assembly and all the United Nations organizations that are providing us their steadfast and selfless assistance.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

05-54196 (E)

We are also grateful for the solidarity and assistance of our brothers and sisters in the region and beyond. I should like personally to express my gratitude for those efforts. We appreciate them enormously.

The President: I wish again to express our condolences to the Governments and the peoples of the countries suffering as a result of these terrible natural disasters and their effects.

Agenda item 111

Elections to fill vacancies in principal organs

(a) Election of five non-permanent members of the Security Council

The President: The General Assembly will now proceed to the election of five non-permanent members of the Security Council to replace those members whose term of office expires on 31 December 2005.

The five outgoing non-permanent members are the following: Algeria, Benin, Brazil, the Philippines and Romania. Those five States cannot be re-elected. Their names, therefore, should not appear on the ballot papers.

Apart from the five permanent members, the Security Council will include in the year 2006 the following States: Argentina, Denmark, Greece, Japan and the United Republic of Tanzania. The names of those States, therefore, should also not appear on the ballot papers.

Of the five non-permanent members that will remain in office in the year 2006, two are from Africa and Asia, one is from Latin America and the Caribbean and two are from Western Europe and other States.

Consequently, pursuant to paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 1991 A (XVIII), of 17 December 1963, the five non-permanent members should be elected according to the following pattern: three from Africa and Asia, one from Eastern Europe and one from Latin America and the Caribbean. The ballot papers reflect that pattern.

In accordance with established practice, there is an understanding to the effect that, of the three States to be elected from Africa and Asia, two should be from Africa and one from Asia.

I should like to inform the Assembly that those candidates, their number not exceeding the number of seats to be filled, receiving the greatest number of votes and a two-thirds majority of those present and voting will be declared elected. In the case of a tie vote for a remaining seat, there will be a restricted ballot limited to those candidates that have obtained an equal number of votes.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to that procedure?

It was so decided.

The President: In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, the election shall be held by secret ballot and there shall be no nominations.

Regarding candidatures, I have been informed by the Chairpersons of the respective regional groups of the following. For the three vacant seats from among the African and Asian States, there are three endorsed candidates, namely, the Congo, Ghana and Qatar. For the one vacant seat from among the Eastern European States, Slovakia is the endorsed candidate. For the one vacant seat from among the Latin American and Caribbean States, there are two candidates, namely, Nicaragua and Peru.

In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, we shall now proceed to the election by secret ballot.

Before we begin the voting process, I should like to remind members that, pursuant to rule 88 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order on the actual conduct of the voting.

I would also like to seek the usual cooperation of representatives during the time of the conduct of the election. Please be reminded that during the voting process all campaigning should cease in the General Assembly Hall. That means in particular that, once the election has begun, no more campaign material may be distributed inside the Hall. All representatives are also requested to remain at their seats so that the voting process can proceed in an orderly manner. I thank members for their cooperation.

We shall now begin the voting process.

Ballot papers marked "A", "B" and "C" will now be distributed. I request representatives to use only those ballot papers that have been distributed.

May I ask representatives to write on the ballot papers marked "A", for the African and Asian States, the names of the three States for which they wish to vote; on the ballot papers marked "B", for the Eastern European States, the name of the one State for which they wish to vote; and on the ballot papers marked "C", for the Latin American and Caribbean States, the name of the one State for which they wish to vote.

A ballot paper containing more names from the relevant region than the number of seats assigned to it will be declared invalid. Names of Member States on a ballot paper that do not belong to that region will not be counted.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Hoy (Cambodia), Mr. Mesquita (Portugal), Ms. Oancea (Romania), Mr. Mwandambwa (United Republic of Tanzania) and Mr. Loedel (Uruguay) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The meeting was suspended at 10.45 a.m. and resumed at 11.40 a.m.

The President: The result of the voting is as follows:

Group A — African and Asian States

Number of ballot papers:	191
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	191
Abstentions:	2
Number of members voting:	189
Required majority of members present and voting:	126
Number of votes obtained:	
Congo	188
Qatar	186
Ghana	184
Indonesia	1

Group B — Eastern European States

Number of ballot papers:	191
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	191
Abstentions:	6
Number of members voting:	185
Required majority of members present and voting:	124
Number of votes obtained:	
Slovakia	185

Group C — Latin American and Caribbean States

Number of ballot papers:	191
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	191
Abstentions:	4
Number of members voting:	187
Required majority of members present and voting:	125
Votes obtained:	
Peru	144
Nicaragua	43

Having obtained the required two-thirds majority and the largest number of votes, the following States were elected members of the Security Council for a two-year term beginning 1 January 2006: Congo, Ghana, Peru, Qatar and Slovakia.

The President: I congratulate the States that have been elected members of the Security Council, and I thank the tellers for their assistance in the election.

We have thus concluded our consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 111.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.

United Nations A/60/PV.30

General Assembly
Sixtieth session

Official Records

30th plenary meeting
Monday, 10 October 2005, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda items 76 and 77

Report of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Genocide and Other Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of Rwanda and Rwandan Citizens Responsible for Genocide and Other Such Violations Committed in the Territory of Neighbouring States between 1 January and 31 December 1994

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the tenth annual report of the International Criminal Tribunal (A/60/229)

Report of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the twelfth annual report of the International Tribunal (A/60/267)

The President: May I take it that the Assembly takes note of the tenth annual report of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda?

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly takes note of the twelfth annual report of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia?

It was so decided.

The President: I now call on Mr. Erik Møse, President of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

Mr. Møse: It is a great honour to address the members of the General Assembly in order to present the tenth annual report of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR).

The work of the ICTR is progressing well. During the period under review, the Trial Chambers have rendered three further trial judgements. This brings the total number of persons convicted or acquitted by the ICTR since its first trials started in 1997 to 25 persons. Another judgement is expected soon.

During the reporting period, the ICTR commenced five new trials involving seven accused. Additionally, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that a further two new trials have started since the annual report was submitted. Therefore, 10 trials are now in progress which involve 26 additional accused. To date, judgement has therefore been rendered, or trials are ongoing, in respect of a total of 52 alleged leaders during the events of 1994.

The ICTR Appeals Chamber also has a very heavy workload. During the reporting period, it

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

05-54202 (E)

delivered four appeal judgements in respect of five persons.

Let me briefly recall the three Trial Chamber judgements rendered during the period under review.

On 15 July 2004, Emmanuel Ndindabahizi, a former Minister of Finance, was convicted of genocide and crimes against humanity and sentenced to imprisonment for the remainder of his life. That trial lasted for only 29 trial days, and judgement was rendered 10 and a half months after its start.

Mikaeli Muhimana, a *conseiller*, was also convicted of genocide and crimes against humanity and sentenced to life imprisonment on 28 April 2005 after 34 trial days.

Finally, Vincent Rutaganira, also a *conseiller*, was sentenced to six years' imprisonment on 14 March 2005 for extermination as a crime against humanity. He was the fourth to plead guilty at the ICTR.

I will now comment on our trials in progress. As members of the Assembly are aware, our five multi-accused trials represent our main challenge because of their volume, complexity and the time needed to complete them. It is therefore important to note that three of them are at an advanced stage. There has been considerable progress during the presentation of the defence cases in the *Butare* trial and the *Military I* case. In the Government trial, involving four Government ministers, the prosecution closed its case in June 2005. The defence case is due to commence on 1 November 2005. The progress made in these three multi-accused trials represents significant steps in the implementation of the ICTR Completion Strategy.

In the other two multi-accused trials, the prosecution is presenting its evidence. In the *Military II* case, I am now pleased to report that over half of the prosecution witnesses have been heard. Another welcome development is that the problems in the *Karemera et al.* case have been resolved. You will recall that the Appeals Chamber decided that this trial, which originally included four accused, should start *de novo*. The trial of one of them, Mr. Rwamakuba, recommenced on 9 June 2005, and the prosecution closed its case in early September. The defence case will start in a few weeks. The trial of the other three accused recommenced in September of this year.

There have also been developments in the single-accused cases. As mentioned in our annual report, the prosecution closed its case in *Seromba* in January 2005, following the testimony of 15 witnesses in the course of 25 trial days. Change of defence counsel has delayed the commencement of the defence case, which will start by the end of October of this year. In the trial of *Muvunyi*, the defence case starts in November 2005.

As mentioned, we began two new single-accused cases after the submission of the annual report. The *Mpambara* trial started on 19 September. The prosecution has already closed its case in under two weeks, pending cross-examination of one prosecution witness. The Chamber heard 10 prosecution witnesses, making it the shortest prosecution case in the history of the Tribunal. The defence case will began in January 2006. And last Monday, 3 October 2005, the *Zigiranyirazo* trial started.

These developments confirm the Tribunal's capacity to complete single-accused cases within a limited number of trial days. It also illustrates the high level of judicial activity in Arusha. This week, between 14 and 18 accused are being transported to and from the courtroom, depending on the daily schedule. All courtrooms are being used to maximum capacity by the 18 trial judges. Sixteen indictees are awaiting trial in our detention centre; their cases will commence as soon as trial capacity allows.

In order to ensure maximum judicial output, there is a need to strike the right balance between the multi-accused and single-accused trials. Limited courtroom space makes this task difficult and requires careful long-term planning. Single-accused trials are normally slotted in when there are breaks in the voluminous trials — so-called "twin-tracking" — or else they are heard in morning and afternoon shifts simultaneously with other trials.

The ICTR's fourth courtroom must be seen in this perspective. It was constructed within a month and was in use on 1 March 2005, the day of its inauguration. This additional courtroom, financed through voluntary contributions, has facilitated the steady progress of our cases and is an important element of our Completion Strategy.

In our Completion Strategy, we have estimated that, on the basis of the information presently available, the Tribunal will have completed cases involving 65 to 70 persons by 2008. On the basis of those projections, I am pleased to confirm that the

ICTR is on track to complete our trials by the deadline set by the Security Council in resolution 1503 (2003).

The Prosecutor continues to concentrate on those persons alleged to have been in positions of leadership and who bear the gravest responsibility for the crimes committed. The Investigations Division completed investigations on new targets within the deadline of 31 December 2004. Of the 16 suspects that were being investigated, the Prosecutor decided to indict eight. Since the submission of the annual report, Chambers have confirmed all eight indictments. This brings the total number of genocide indictees presently at large to 20.

On 23 February 2005, the Prosecutor handed over the dossiers of 15 suspects to the Rwandan authorities. On 26 July 2005, the case files of a further 10 individuals who have likewise not been indicted by the ICTR were delivered to Rwandan authorities. The Prosecutor also intends to transfer some ICTR indictees to national jurisdictions for trial. The decision to transfer cases to national jurisdictions will be taken by the Trial Chambers on a case-by-case basis, once requests for transfer are received from the prosecution. The Prosecution has entered negotiations with certain States to ensure national prosecution of some ICTR indictees. One country has already agreed to prosecute a suspect and efforts are continuing to get other countries to follow suit. Member States will contribute to the implementation of our Completion Strategy by accepting transfers of ICTR cases for trial.

The Prosecution has stepped up its tracking activities and has visited a number of African countries where some fugitives are suspected of residing. The Prosecutor has strongly encouraged national authorities to provide more significant cooperation in the tracking and arrest of those persons. Member States are requested to assist with the apprehension of fugitives.

Last year, I described the problems caused by the recruitment freeze, which came about because some Member States had not paid their contributions to the ICTR. It is essential to avoid a new freeze. In order to respect the time frames laid down by the Security Council, the Tribunals must continue to receive the necessary resources.

The Registry continues to support the judicial process by servicing the other branches of the Tribunal. Here I have to refer to the annual report for details, and let me simply stress the important work by all sections, including the Court Management Section, the Witness Section, the Language Services Section, and the Defence Counsel Section. In this connection, let me emphasize that the important work of the defence teams is highly appreciated.

The Outreach Programme continues to be a priority, with the Information Centre in Kigali being its focal point. The annual report describes this work. Let me reiterate that a prioritized activity is also to receive Rwandans at the Tribunal. Recently, prominent Rwandan judges visited Arusha, and groups of university students arrive frequently. The Tribunal continues to appreciate the cooperation of the Rwandan authorities. There is a steady flow of witnesses from Kigali and Arusha. It is essential that both the Prosecution and the Defence receive the necessary assistance in terms of witnesses and documents.

Let me add that any allegations concerning intimidation of prosecution or defence witnesses are taken very seriously by the Tribunal and are investigated in order to get to the truth of the matter.

On behalf of the Tribunal, let me conclude by expressing our deep appreciation to the General Assembly and the Secretary-General for their continued support of the ICTR.

The President: I now call on Mr. Theodor Meron, President of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Meron: I am sincerely honoured to address this Assembly again. Today, it is with great pleasure that I present the twelfth annual report of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Before I do so, I wish to thank the Member States of the United Nations for the critical support they have long afforded the Tribunal. Such steadfast support has allowed the historic vision of our Tribunal to become a tangible and compelling force in the quest for peace, justice and reconciliation in the region of the former Yugoslavia.

Since I last reported to the Assembly one year ago, we have continued to work vigorously towards accomplishing our vital mission. I am pleased to report in this regard that we remain diligent in our vigorous pursuit of our mission and continue to make noteworthy strides despite significant difficulties. This year, the Trial Chambers and the Appeals Chamber have heard and disposed of a record number of cases.

During the reporting period, the Tribunal's Trial Chambers, which continue to work at full capacity, have been involved in 37 cases. The Appeals Chamber decided five appeals from judgement, as well as 23 interlocutory appeals. Notably, four cases have also been referred to national jurisdictions, and three of those decisions are now under appeal.

Nonetheless, we are not content to rest on our laurels. We continue to look to new and creative methods that might increase the efficiency of our proceedings and reduce the costs of our operations without sacrificing the quality of our work. Indeed, the year under review provided several important internal reforms to ensure compliance with Security Council resolutions 1503 (2003) and 1534 (2004), which together outline the Tribunal's Completion Strategy.

In my last assessment to the Security Council covering the period from May to June 2005, I estimated that by 2009 the Tribunal could complete the trials of all accused in our custody at that time. I also warned that further growth of the trial docket would make achieving that ambitious target entirely dependent on at least some cases being disposed of by guilty pleas.

We have implemented a number of changes to ensure that we continue to proceed at maximum capacity. Of particular salience, several procedural rules have been amended, markedly expediting our procedures without sacrificing the defendants' due process rights.

In the face of an increase in new indictments, the arrival of new indictees and fugitives and only one new guilty plea, we have re-doubled our efforts, not only to proceed with speed and deliberation, but also to see that justice is done for both victims and accused alike, that due process is honoured and that accused are afforded fair trials consonant with the highest standards of international justice.

Right now, three novel multiple defendant trials are at the pre-trial stage at the Tribunal. By prosecuting several cases determined by the Tribunal to be based on the same factual scenarios under the same umbrella of a larger, single prosecution, multiple defendant trials are designed to increase the efficiency of the Tribunal while maintaining judicial fairness to the accused. Joinder has already been granted by a Trial Chamber in the first of these landmark cases, allowing eight Srebrenica defendants from six different cases to be prosecuted under the purview of one bench; this would be nine if fugitive Tolimir is apprehended. The other two multiple defendant trials on the Tribunal's docket involve six and seven defendants, respectively; this would be eight if fugitive Djordjevic is apprehended.

We have also scrutinized our practices and procedures in search of ways to ensure that the Tribunal fulfils its mandate. In this regard, I am pleased to report to you today that all sections of the Tribunal are coordinating their efforts to increase efficiency and to ensure that the Tribunal's resources are focused on the prosecution of the most senior officials accused of the most serious crimes.

I have also established two judicial Working Groups, one to examine ways of speeding up trials and another to examine how to speed up appeals. The working group on trials, chaired by Judge Bonomy, has been considering proposals to streamline pre-trial and trial procedures and to procure additional courtroom space. The working group on appeals, currently chaired by Judge Mumba, has been examining rules governing the admissibility of additional evidence at the appellate stage and is exploring various time-saving procedures for translating decisions and judgements for appellants. The appeals working group presented a number of proposals to the plenary of judges, following which recommendations have been made to the Rules Committee. The Rule amendments propose reducing briefing times for sentencing appeals, separating additional evidence motions from the filing of the merit appeals to avoid successive additional evidence motions and increasing the power of the pre-appeal judge to dispose of routine motions without hearing the opposing party, unless prejudiced by the motion.

This year, we have also improved communication between the Association of Defence Counsel and the Tribunal in an effort to boost efficiency in proceedings. In addition, a pilot electronic Court (e-Court) system was introduced in February. This system, which integrates all case-related documents into a central electronic database, will increase the accessibility of information while expediting proceedings. In another positive development, this year witnessed the adoption of Security Council resolution 1597 (2005), which allows for the re-nomination and the re-election of former and present ad litem Judges, thus enhancing continuity and expertise. On 24 August 2005, elections were held, and we now have an elected pool of 27 experienced jurists who are willing to serve the

Tribunal as ad litem judges. We are beginning to draw the first ad litem judges to complete our benches, as necessary.

In addition to carrying out our own reforms, we have strongly supported rule of law reforms in the former Yugoslav republics that strengthen their ability to bring to justice perpetrators of crimes within the ICTY's jurisdiction.

On this front, I am pleased to report that the State Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina opened its War Crimes Chamber on 9 March 2005. That is truly a historic accomplishment for the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and for the international community as a whole. It was achieved through the coordinated efforts of the Government and the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Tribunal, donor Governments and the international community. Despite serious difficulties, those extraordinary efforts saw the War Crimes Chamber up and running in a remarkably short period of time.

As part of its Completion Strategy, the Tribunal has begun referring cases involving intermediate- and lower-ranking accused to that Chamber. Thus far, the Prosecutor has filed 12 referral motions involving 20 accused. To date, six of those motions have been heard and one has been withdrawn. The Referral Bench has granted five motions: four for transfer to Bosnia and Herzegovina's War Crimes Chamber and one for transfer to the Republic of Croatia. One motion has been denied. Four of the decisions transferring cases have been appealed, and the Appeals Chamber has affirmed one of the transfers.

The Tribunal continues to lay further legal and logistical groundwork for the transfer of lower- and intermediate-level prosecutions to national jurisdictions. We have supported initiatives to build local capacity through the training of judges and prosecutors in Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Partly as a result, local professionalism and local capacity to handle such complex cases is steadily increasing. The Tribunal has also distributed key materials translated into the main languages of the region, and it continues to develop close relations with legal professionals, the non-governmental organization community, local media and Governments.

Crucially, in the past year the ICTY has augmented its efforts to persuade the States of the former Yugoslavia to actively search for and arrest indicted individuals who remain at large. During the reporting period, 24 accused were transferred or surrendered to The Hague. That leaves us with only seven fugitives who have yet to be apprehended, although we remain gravely concerned that included among those seven are three of the most important indictees: Radovan Karadžić, Ratko Mladić and Ante Gotovina.

We ask for the full cooperation of all Member States as we seek to bring to justice the perpetrators of the atrocities that scarred the Balkans in the 1990s, devastating hundreds of thousands of lives. The nations represented here today must recognize the risks posed to international justice if those fugitives escape the reach of the Tribunal. It is plain: a dark shadow will be cast over the Tribunal's historic accomplishments if senior-level accused are not brought to justice at The Hague. We must work together to guard against that threat to the legacy of the Tribunal and to international justice.

This past July marked the tenth anniversary of the horrific Srebrenica massacres, in which about 7,900 Muslim men and boys were summarily executed in what has been recognized by the Tribunal as a genocide. I was honoured to speak at the moving ceremony at the memorial for the victims on 11 July 2005. The suspected engineers of that genocide, Karadžić and Mladić, have been evading justice now for a decade. It is hard to dispute the European Parliament's July resolution stating that the capture, transfer and condemnation of those guilty of war crimes is a minimum act of recognition for the thousands of war crimes victims in Srebrenica and elsewhere. Against such a horrifying backdrop, apprehending and trying those three senior-level accused is the very least that we can do.

Full cooperation from the States in the region is paramount if we are to secure the arrest of the remaining fugitives. States' cooperation has improved in some cases in the past year. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of indictees transferred to the Tribunal — 24 since the end of last year — thanks to the efforts of the authorities of both Serbia and Montenegro and the Republika Srpska. However, the Serbian Government has not executed other arrest warrants transmitted to it by the Tribunal.

Five of the seven accused remaining at large, including Mladić, are believed to be in Serbia and Montenegro or the Republika Srpska.

Overall, the Republika Srpska's level of cooperation with the Tribunal remains insufficient, as it has provided no information on Karadžić and Mladić, and has failed to transfer wartime documentation to The Hague. Croatia's level of cooperation remains satisfactory in most areas, with the marked exception of that country's failure to apprehend and render Gotovina to The Hague.

Finally, it goes without saying that when and if the fugitives move across borders to avoid arrest, the authorities of the State to which they move will be similarly obliged to pursue, arrest and transfer those fugitives to The Hague without delay.

By now I hope it is clear that over the past year the Tribunal has been working at full throttle. One of the chief factors affecting the Tribunal's ability to operate at full capacity and with increased efficiency was the General Assembly's lifting of the hiring freeze in January 2005. As I reported last year, the 2004 freeze jeopardized the Tribunal's ability to complete its mission. With the lifting of the freeze and the passage of resolution 59/274, which provided much-needed appropriations, we were able to replace the requisite staff and to continue apace. In order to avoid a repetition of such difficulties, I call on all States to pay their assessed contributions in a timely manner.

In one sense, the citizens of the former Yugoslavia are fortunate compared with the citizens of other war-torn regions: they have the Tribunal. The Tribunal has not only made a fundamental and lasting contribution by bringing justice to thousands in the region, but it has also established an essential historical record of the atrocities resulting from the war. The Tribunal's assignment of personal criminal responsibility to those who abused their positions of leadership and power helps to dispel the view that certain rogue nations and ethnic groups must forever bear the stain of their leaders' misdeeds. The Tribunal's achievements have also generated increased respect for the rule of law, which has sparked judicial reforms throughout the region. Justice is an essential element of national reconciliation, and thus peace and justice go hand in hand. Due largely to the Tribunal, the States of the former Yugoslavia now have the opportunity to construct a lasting peace.

The benefits of the Tribunal are, moreover, felt far beyond the Balkan region. The ICTY's work has further challenged the notorious tradition of impunity for senior officials who commit the most serious international crimes. During its 11 years of existence, the Tribunal has also shown that transparent international justice is viable. We have built an impressive and unprecedented body of jurisprudence both on substantive international humanitarian and criminal law, and, especially, on criminal procedure — a subject on which there was little precedent from Nuremberg. Our judgments on procedural and substantive law now supply the foundation for all international criminal courts, and our success serves as a model for national prosecutions of those who commit wartime atrocities. Our leading decisions on international humanitarian law will provide essential guidance for the tribunals in the former Yugoslavia, and our staff members are sharing their valuable experience by training staff for those nascent courts. Our jurisprudence will likewise contribute to the success of other national and international courts designed to enforce international humanitarian law, including the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the International Criminal Court, both of which have used our Tribunal as a model. Lastly, understanding of international humanitarian and criminal law and human rights law has increased dramatically as the world has followed the proceedings at The Hague.

As with many things of great value, however, there is a cost. The cases on the Tribunal's docket are by definition large and complex, and hence our proceedings are necessarily lengthy and costly. Often, the crimes charged — connected to entire military campaigns — occurred over the course of months or years and across many locations, and involved several defendants. With many counts in some indictments, dozens or hundreds of witnesses, thousands of pages of documents — most of which have to be translated from regional languages into English and French, the Tribunal's working languages — the trials are extremely complex. Member States' continued financial support is the key to our success. And, I submit, the funds required to complete the Tribunal's mission are a small price to pay for the significant rewards to be gained from the Tribunal's work. As Zeid Al-Hashib, former representative of Jordan to the United Nations, has wisely pointed out, peace is far more cost-effective than war. Indeed, the yearly cost of operating the Tribunal is less than one twentieth the

yearly cost of the peacekeeping operations in the former Yugoslavia during the war. With the full support of all Member States, we look forward to completing our landmark mission and providing a model for criminal tribunals yet to come.

As the Tribunal moves 10 years beyond the atrocities at Srebrenica, the continued support of the international community is more important than ever in order to demonstrate to the world that such crimes will not be tolerated and will not go unpunished. The work of the Tribunal will ensure that those most responsible for such serious international crimes will, as we move briskly towards the Tribunal's completion, continue to receive the very highest standards of international justice. Our leading decisions will continue to provide essential guidance for the fair and effective prosecution of those who commit wartime atrocities.

Finally, I would like to report that my tenure as President of the ICTY will end in mid-November, though I will continue on as an Appeals Chamber judge. This thus marks my final appearance before the Assembly in the capacity of President of the Tribunal. It has truly been a great honour and privilege to lead that great institution. Please allow me the opportunity to express all my sincere gratitude for members' continued support of the Tribunal and, indeed, of international justice and the fight against impunity.

The President: I want to thank the President of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia for his long service to the Tribunal and to the international community and for preserving the values of justice in the world.

Mr. Watson (United Kingdom): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania, the candidate countries Croatia and Turkey, the European Free Trade Association country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

First of all we would like to thank Judge Mose, President of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) and Judge Meron, President of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), for their briefings. We also thank Judge Meron for his distinguished service during his term as President.

The European Union believes strongly in the principle of no impunity for the most serious crimes of concern to the international community. Both the ICTR and the ICTY were established to hold individuals accountable for such crimes. Peace, justice and the rule of law are inextricably linked, and both Tribunals have made very important contributions towards reconciliation and peacebuilding in the countries that they have served. The European Union reaffirms its full support for the ICTR and the ICTY, and commends their entire staff in their efforts to bring justice to victims of the most shocking crimes.

We thank the ICTR for its concise tenth annual report (A/60/229) and the ICTY for its comprehensive twelfth annual report (A/60/267), although we regret that the latter's length impeded a more timely distribution. We welcome the developments and improvements achieved over the past 12 months.

The ICTR has delivered three trial judgements, bringing the total to 19 judgements involving 25 accused since 1997. A further 25 persons are currently on trial. The Appeals Chamber has delivered four judgements in respect of five persons. Appeals in a further 10 trial judgements and one application for review of the trial judgement are pending. Five new trials have been started during the reporting period. We are grateful for the further update on progress today. The ICTR submitted its revised Completion Strategy (S/2005/336, enclosure) to the Security Council in May, and we welcome the construction of the fourth courtroom as an important element in that strategy.

Unfortunately, we have had little time to study the ICTY report. But we know that a large number of indictees have arrived at the ICTY. We recognize that the increased numbers awaiting trial in The Hague will impact on the timely implementation of the Completion Strategy, but hope that that can be kept to a minimum. We welcome the completion of pre-indictment investigations and the submission of final indictments. The EU also warmly welcomes the establishment of working groups of judges on speeding up trials and appeals, and looks forward to hearing more about the implementation of the recommendations of those groups.

The European Union welcomes the commitment of the Presidents of both Tribunals to their completion strategies. The Tribunals should indeed make every effort to respect the deadlines set out in Security

Council resolutions 1503 (2003) and 1534 (2004). In return, the international community also has a commitment. Sufficient resources, cooperation, assistance and the support of Member States are essential to the work of the Tribunals.

The European Union welcomes the considerable improvement in the cooperation of States with the Tribunals over the past 12 months. It is crucial that States cooperate with requests for access to archives and documents, in securing the appearance in court of prosecution witnesses and in the arrest and transfer of indictees still at large. We reiterate the need to intensify efforts to arrest and transfer Radovan Karadzic, Ratko Mladic and Ante Gotovina to the ICTY and Felicien Kabuga to the ICTR for trial. The continuous, full cooperation of Rwanda and its neighbours and the countries of the western Balkans with the respective Tribunals remains essential.

Ms. Bahemuka (Kenya), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The EU welcomes the efforts made by both Tribunals to transfer cases to domestic jurisdictions and their activities in the area of national capacity-building. We welcome the opening of the Special Chamber for war crimes prosecutions in the State Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina on 9 March 2005 and the first transfer of a case from the ICTY on 29 September. The EU restates its appeal to the Tribunals to ensure that the necessary standards of fair trial, independence and full respect for human rights are complied with in national trials.

Finally, we would like to reassure the Tribunals of the full support of the EU and to thank all members of the Tribunals and their Chambers, Appeals Chambers and Registries, as well as the Offices of the Prosecutors, for their contribution to peace, justice and the rule of law and for the legacy they will leave for the future development of international criminal law.

Mr. Rosli (Malaysia): I should like to thank Judge Erik Møse, President of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), and Judge Theodor Meron, President of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), for presenting the reports of the two Tribunals (A/60/229, A/60/267) and for their excellent leadership of the Tribunals during the respective reporting periods. The reports provide a comprehensive review of the progress of the work of the Tribunals as well as the difficulties encountered by them. We commend both Presidents and all members of the Chambers, the Offices of the Prosecutors and the Registries of both Tribunals for the progress achieved so far.

Malaysia continues to strongly believe in the importance of upholding the principles of justice and equality, which international humanitarian law stands for. We regard adherence to the rule of law to be a necessary basis for upholding those principles. The Tribunals were established, among other things, to bring to justice persons allegedly responsible for violations of international humanitarian law and to contribute to the restoration of peace by promoting reconciliation in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. Since their creation, the Tribunals have played a significant role in clearly demonstrating that genocide and other serious violations of international humanitarian law will not be tolerated. The Tribunals were created to ensure that the perpetrators of genocide and other serious violations of international humanitarian law will not get away with impunity.

The work of the Tribunals is of immense importance in bringing to justice the perpetrators of atrocities and in the development of international justice and international law. There is no doubt that the decisions of the Tribunals have contributed to the progressive and constructive development of case law in the spheres of general international law and international humanitarian law, with respect to various questions of procedure and competence, as well as with respect to substantive issues of considerable importance. The Tribunals have promoted advocacy for victim-oriented restitutive justice in international criminal law.

Malaysia is pleased to note that both the ICTY and the ICTR have put considerable effort into implementation of their Completion Strategies, as set out in Security Council resolutions 1503 (2003) and 1534 (2004), which require both Tribunals to take all possible measures to complete investigations by the end of 2004, complete all trial activities at first instance by the end of 2008 and complete all work in 2010. We are also pleased to note that both Tribunals have continued to make substantial reforms to improve their administrative capacity while working towards the timely implementation of the Completion Strategy.

The appointment of ad litem judges has allowed the Tribunals to increase their judicial productivity and

meet the demands of the rise in cases. The Tribunals must be in a position to undertake their tasks efficiently so that detainees are spared undue delay in the completion of their trials. With the appointment of the ad litem judges, the Tribunals should be able to meet their target of completing all trials by 2008. My delegation is pleased to note that a Malaysian national is contributing to the process through his service as an ad litem judge.

I would now like to comment first on the activities of the ICTR. Malaysia is pleased to note from the report that the ICTR is on course to complete its trials by 2008. The President's efforts in the scheduling and planning of trials to best utilize time and resources should be commended. We are pleased to see that since his appointment in 2003, the Prosecutor has stepped up efforts to streamline cases, as required by the Completion Strategy, and transfer cases to national authorities. Malaysia also notes that the construction of the fourth courtroom has helped speed up the trials and remains a crucial element of the Tribunal's Completion Strategy.

In addition, it is critical to the success of the Tribunal that the people of the region be informed of its work and comprehend its significance. We appreciate the perseverance of the Registrar in promoting greater awareness of the Tribunal and in engaging the interest and the support of the local population, States of the region and the international community through capacity-building programmes. We encourage him to continue his efforts.

Turning to the ICTY, my delegation notes with appreciation that the Tribunal has undergone structural and operational reform during the reporting period. The most significant internal reform was the amendment of rules 98 bis and 73 (D) to enable the Tribunal to shorten the time frame by allowing oral arguments instead of written briefs and to conserve the resources of the Tribunal. Malaysia is pleased to note that the Tribunal is using technology for its modernization. The implementation of the "e-Court" system has contributed to speeding up trials and appeals.

Malaysia notes that part of the lasting legacy of the ICTY will be the strengthened criminal justice system in Bosnia and Herzegovina. To that end, the establishment of the Special Chamber for war crimes prosecutions is crucial for enabling the ICTY to complete its trial work by 2008. The establishment of the Chamber is testament to the growing and improved cooperation with the national authorities. Although the Chamber will allow for the transfer of cases of lower-level prosecutions to national jurisdiction, more work will be required to ensure that they are completed in a timely manner.

It has been more than a decade since the Tribunal was established. Malaysia is pleased to note that it has been making tremendous progress in completing the cases before it. However, we are concerned that 10 publicly indicted persons remain at large, including major indicted war criminals, in particular Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic. We strongly hope that the matter will be addressed as expeditiously as possible. Malaysia shares the concern expressed in the report at the fact that such major figures remaining at large, with impunity, would not only prevent the Tribunal from completing its work within the time frame but would also undermine the successful cooperation with the national authorities.

The work of the ICTY and the ICTR has greatly contributed to the field of post-conflict justice — not only in furthering international criminal jurisprudence on matters such as individual responsibility and in connection with the ability to exercise jurisdiction over crimes committed during internal conflicts, but also in terms of procedural refinements. In reiterating its fullest support for both Tribunals, Malaysia calls once again on the international community to give full and sustained support to the Tribunals in the implementation of their mandate and objectives. A sustained commitment by the major Powers is also crucial. The delivery of justice is important for a sustainable peace-building process. Without justice, there will be no peace.

Mr. Haneda (Japan): At the outset, I would like to thank the Presidents of the Tribunals, Judge Theodor Meron and Judge Erik Møse, for presenting their annual reports to the General Assembly. I also thank Judge Meron for his dedicated service as the President of the Tribunal.

Japan appreciates the fact that the Prosecutors of the two Tribunals completed their investigative work by the end of 2004 and submitted the indictments of senior indictees in accordance with the completion strategies. We strongly hope that both the ICTY and the ICTR will continue to make the utmost effort to

promote the efficient and effective conduct of their trial activities and to improve their management capacity in order to ensure the completion of all trials by the end of 2010.

Allow me to make a few comments on the work of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

First of all, we welcome the election of the 27 ad litem judges by the General Assembly on 24 August this year, and we look forward to their contribution, in cooperation with the 16 permanent judges elected last autumn and to be appointed on 17 November, to bringing about justice in the region of the former Yugoslavia and to achieving the Completion Strategy of the ICTY.

Japan notes that Stankovic has been transferred from the ICTY to the war crimes chamber of the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which represents the first transfer of an ICTY accused to the domestic courts. It is a remarkable step forward towards the establishment of the rule of law in the region that mid- to low-level accused are going to be tried in a national jurisdiction. We hope that the judicial capacity of States in the region will be strengthened and that the transfer of mid- to low-level defendants to domestic courts will be further enhanced, ensuring that international standards of due process and the rights of defendants are observed.

Those achievements notwithstanding, Japan remains concerned that those responsible for the most serious violations of international humanitarian law — Karadzic, Mladic and Gotovina — have yet to be arrested. Japan reiterates that the full commitment of neighbouring States is essential for the arrest and extradition of those fugitives.

Next, let me turn to the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR).

Japan requests that the ICTR continue its efforts to conduct trials in as effective a manner as possible, in order to realize the prospect set out in its annual report that the first phase of the trials will be completed by 2008, and then finish implementing the entire Completion Strategy.

As stated in the ICTR's annual report, it is evidence of the progress made towards bringing about justice and the end of impunity that guilt and innocence have been determined with respect to the alleged former leaders, who probably would not have been brought before a court but for the establishment of the ICTR. We note with appreciation that the transfer of cases to domestic courts is proceeding satisfactorily, as demonstrated by the fact that the Prosecutor had transferred the files of 15 suspects to Rwanda by 30 June 2005. In that regard, we reiterate our call for further cooperation by neighbouring States.

Taking into account the intentions of both Tribunals to complete the first phase of trials by the end of 2008, in accordance with their completion strategies, it is high time for further consideration to be given to future schedules, that is, the precise scheduling of appeals cases. Scheduling well in advance and better coordination between the two Tribunals will be required to avoid placing too heavy a burden on the Appeal Chambers of the Tribunal.

We call for the utmost cooperation and effort on the part of all staff of the Tribunals, neighbouring States and the international community so that a great purpose can be fulfilled, namely bringing to justice all those responsible for the serious violations of international humanitarian law that were committed in the two regions.

Finally, let me say once again that Japan carefully examines the regular reports of the ICTY and the ICTR to the Security Council and to the General Assembly on their efforts and on the progress being made towards the fulfilment of their completion strategies.

Mr. Andrianarivelo-Razafy (Madagascar) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Madagascar would like to thank the President of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the President of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, respectively, for their informative and relevant statements.

The establishment of the two Tribunals was of historical importance, as they were the first courts to condemn crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and indescribable atrocities. They were pioneers because their work contributed to the adoption of the Rome Statute creating the International Criminal Court, a standing court whose ultimate aim is to put an end to impunity.

My delegation has reviewed with interest documents A/60/267 and A/60/229 and would like to pay tribute to the staff of the two Tribunals for the

untiring efforts they made to speedily alleviate the burden of work of the courts and to fulfil the heavy and demanding responsibilities that they must shoulder as part of the Completion Strategy.

With regard to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, my country notes with satisfaction the measures undertaken to speed up the trials currently under way before the Trial Chambers.

The Tribunal is now working at full throttle thanks to the implementation of the Completion Strategy, which involves the scheduling and planning of present and future trials, an increase in the number of judges through the creation of a pool of ad litem judges, pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1431 (2002) and 1512 (2003); the establishment of a trial committee whose aim is to facilitate the preparation of new cases; and the creation of a Translation Working Group charged with considering ways and means to facilitate the translation of documents, so as to avoid delays in the conduct of cases.

We are confident that the inauguration of a fourth courtroom, which has been operational since 1 March 2005, will contribute to alleviating the Court's heavy burden of work. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Governments of Great Britain and of Norway for their generous contribution, which made it possible to build the hearing room in record time.

In the 10 years of its existence, the ICTR has carried out the trials of 50 persons, including highly placed individuals. In accordance with Security Council resolution 1503 (2003), the Prosecutor's Office has completed its inquiries into the alleged perpetrators of the crime of genocide. In our view, that is an encouraging sign of improvement in the work of the ICTR.

I would like to underscore that the true role of international tribunals is to seek out and pass judgement on the masterminds of the most serious crimes, such as genocide, as well as on the principal actors and senior-level perpetrators — the leaders — leaving judgement in the case of their subordinates to various national courts. Transferring intermediate- or lower-level accused to competent domestic courts and providing active support for the strengthening of judicial capacities and the training of the personnel of domestic courts are also key elements in the strategy.

The two Tribunals have a historic responsibility, particularly with regard to conflict prevention. They are responsible for defending humanitarian values and contributing to the restoration and maintenance of peace in regions of the world where atrocious crimes have taken place.

In accordance with the time frame set out in resolutions 1503 (2003) and 1534 (2004), both Tribunals are currently in the Completion Strategy phase. In that context, we support the recommendations contained in document A/60/229 that the international community provide the Tribunals with sufficient human, financial and material resources to enable them to carry out their respective mandates in an effective manner. Furthermore, the full cooperation of national authorities is of great importance, because international criminal justice and national criminal justice are complementary.

Finally, we urge all Member States to cooperate closely with the two Tribunals with a view to overcoming problems relating to the arrest and transfer to them of accused and criminals still at large.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to express its heartfelt gratitude to Judge Theodor Meron, President of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, for his worthy contribution to the work of that institution.

Mr. Løvald (Norway): I would like to begin by expressing Norway's full recognition of the achievements and high standards of the International Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda and for the Former Yugoslavia, as reflected in the various well-reasoned judgements and in the reports before us. We would like to thank the Presidents of both Tribunals for the detailed annual reports, which in our view accurately reflect the sustained progress made during the period under review.

The work of the Tribunals has played a crucial role in advancing the cause of justice in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. As we have consistently maintained, the Tribunals also have a broader significance. They represent effective mechanisms for the enforcement of international criminal law and will leave a legacy of international jurisprudence that can guide other courts, including those at the national level, as well as the International Criminal Court, and prevent the commission of the worst crimes of international concern. As such, they are contributing to

the development of international criminal justice and to the fight against impunity for mass atrocities in general.

We commend both Tribunals for their efforts to put the completion strategies, approved by the Security Council, into effect. The Tribunals have increased their administrative efficiency significantly, and both appear to be on schedule. According to the report of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), the Tribunal is on course to complete all trials in the first instance, involving 65 to 70 persons, by 2008.

The financial situation of the Tribunals, however, remains worrying. It could threaten the implementation of the Completion Strategies. It is therefore of the utmost importance that all States honour their financial commitments and pay their assessed contributions on time.

We are pleased to note that both the Rwanda Tribunal and the Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia have continued to operate at full capacity during the period under review.

Norway welcomes the establishment of the fourth courtroom at the ICTR, which will help to further increase the Tribunal's capacity. The Tribunal is now running trials in the four courtrooms simultaneously. Norway's financial contribution, together with that of the United Kingdom, to the construction of that courtroom is a testimony to our continuing strong support for the Tribunal.

In implementing the Completion Strategies, both Tribunals have rightly resolved to concentrate on the most senior leaders suspected of bearing the greatest responsibility for the crimes within the jurisdiction of the Tribunals. At the same time, the Tribunals have focused on transferring cases involving intermediate- and low-level offenders to national jurisdictions, where possible. It is important that they receive the full support and cooperation of the international community. Norway has implemented legal procedures that will enable us to fully cooperate with and assist the Tribunal. We urge other States to do the same.

We are encouraged by the establishment of the War Crimes Chamber of the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the period under review, there has been an increasing number of persons awaiting trial at the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), which could severely impact on the timely implementation of the Completion Strategy. Since November 2004, 22 new indictees have arrived at the ICTY. The new War Crimes Chamber will contribute to the success of the Completion Strategy. Norway has therefore contributed financially to the establishment of the Chamber.

The Tribunals' increased cooperation with States, relevant institutions and non-governmental organizations is partly a result of the expanded activities and continuous development of the Tribunals' outreach programmes. Norway commends the Tribunals for their efforts to assist in strengthening national jurisdictions in their handling of cases and to provide accurate information about their activities in order to raise awareness of and increase support for their work.

Norway reiterates the need to intensify efforts to arrest and transfer to the Tribunals for trial the main fugitive indictees, as identified by the Security Council. The main mission of the Tribunals will not be fulfilled unless the highest-ranking indictees are brought to justice.

All States must honour their international obligation to cooperate with regard to requests for full and effective assistance to the Tribunals. That also applies with regard to witnesses, giving financial and material support and, not least, providing practical assistance in the enforcement of sentences. We encourage States to prove their continued commitment to the work of the Tribunals through concrete action in those crucial fields. We will stand by our long-term commitment to the successful completion of the missions assigned to the two Tribunals by the Security Council.

Mr. Manongi (United Republic of Tanzania): We would like to thank the President of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), Judge Eric Møse, and the President of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, Judge Theodor Meron, for their respective briefings.

The pursuit of justice in the wake of genocide and serious violations of human rights in Rwanda and in the former Yugoslavia is an undertaking by the two Tribunals on our behalf and in our interests. For us, their work deserves our utmost collective support.

We commend the ICTR for the pace of its prosecutions and dedication to its Completion Strategy.

We recognize that this planning is dependent on the assistance and cooperation of States being requested to assist with apprehending the indictees who remain at large.

In the interest of justice and stability, not only in Rwanda but also in the Great Lakes region, apprehending and extraditing those under indictment need to be given greater attention. This is in keeping with the obligation by all Member States to support the Tribunal in discharging its mandate. We should do nothing that might subvert the 2008 completion target that the Tribunal has set for itself.

We welcome the completion of the fourth courtroom and are grateful that it has contributed to the Tribunal's efficiency as well as to its Completion Strategy. We thank the Governments of Norway and the United Kingdom whose voluntary contributions made the courtroom construction possible.

We are particularly encouraged by the effort being undertaken by the Prosecutor under rule 11 bis to explore how and under what conditions some indictees might be transferred to Rwanda for prosecution. This is a reaffirmation of the strengthening of and confidence in the judicial system in Rwanda. It is also an important contribution to the mutual trust between the Government of Rwanda and the Tribunal. It is in this spirit that we welcome the transfer of 15 dossiers of unindicted suspects to the Government of Rwanda. The suspects of course, remain innocent until proven guilty.

Tanzania continues to support measures by the Tribunal to disseminate information concerning its work internationally and, more importantly, in Rwanda. If Rwanda is to achieve healing and reconciliation, forgiveness and reconciliation must come from within. We see the Tribunal's Outreach Programme as being effective in that regard and, therefore, it needs greater support as part of the Completion Strategy.

We want to underscore that the Tribunal's Completion Strategy is premised on the prosecution of high-ranking officials and those bearing greatest responsibility for the crimes committed during the genocide. We therefore join in calling on other Member States to accept the transfer of the remaining lower-rated cases to their respective national jurisdictions for prosecution.

It is our firm belief, in support of the Tribunals for Rwanda and for the former Yugoslavia, that those indicted by the courts must be brought to justice if the affected countries and regions are to see stability. It is also our conviction that the success of the two Tribunals is attributable to the continued financial support from the international community. We appeal again to Member States to pay their assessed contributions to the Tribunals. They have proven that they are now more efficient and need our strong support to fulfil their Completion Strategies. The provision of adequate financial resources is critical. We should not fail them.

Mr. Kaludjerovic (Serbia and Montenegro): In the wake of the catastrophic earthquake that caused extensive loss of life and material damage in Pakistan, India and Afghanistan, I would like to convey the deepest condolences of my Government to the people and Governments of those countries.

At the outset I would like to thank the President of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), Judge Theodor Meron, for his comprehensive annual report.

I am pleased to be able to inform the Assembly that Serbia and Montenegro has recently opened negotiations on the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union, which demonstrates our firm commitment to build upon the best traditions and achievements in strengthening our society and relations with our neighbours. This step will undoubtedly bring us closer to the ultimate goal: Euro-Atlantic integration.

In that respect, the authorities of Serbia and Montenegro and the Government of Serbia continue in their efforts to honour their international obligations towards the ICTY. The Completion Strategy of our cooperation with the Hague Tribunal is [illegible] and we are completely aware of that. [illegible] of a vital interest to Serbia and Montenegro. There is no other solution and there is no alternative to full and unconditional cooperation.

Cooperation with the ICTY can be considered in several aspects: apprehension and transfer of fugitives, granting of waivers to Government officials, turning over documents, dialogue and exchange of visits, regional cooperation and the ICTY Completion Strategy.

Serbia and Montenegro is continuously taken, all necessary measures to facilitate the voluntary surrender and arrest of the remaining fugitives believed to be within its territory. The number of indictees transferred from Serbia and Montenegro to the Tribunal now is 37. These transfers serve, inter alia, as an example of efficient cooperation based on reliable information provided in a timely manner.

At the same time, the authorities of Serbia and Montenegro are demonstrating their firm commitment to fulfil their international obligations by exerting continuous efforts to find and, if possible, apprehend six remaining fugitives that, according to the Office of the Prosecutor, are travelling through or residing in the territory of Serbia and Montenegro. The number of requests for the assistance of the Office of the Prosecutor has exceeded 140. These requests are being processed in a prompt and timely manner, with fewer than 2 to 3 per cent still pending or unanswered longer than two months.

The Council of Ministers of Serbia and Montenegro and the Government of the Republic of Serbia have so far granted waivers regarding official and military secrets to 170 members of the army and police, as well as Government officials. In this area of cooperation, Serbia and Montenegro is provided effective assistance to the Office of the Prosecutor and the ICTY in tracking down, interviewing and taking testimony from witnesses and suspects.

So far, the Office of the Prosecutor has been provided with several thousand documents, including classified papers. These documents have been made available to the Office of the Prosecutor much more quickly during the period covered by the report than previously. Serbia and Montenegro now provides the Office with all documents at its disposal.

As a sign of intensified cooperation with the ICTY, the regular exchange of visits between Belgrade and The Hague has become a regular practice. These visits have significantly contributed to the exchange of relevant information and the re-establishment of an atmosphere of mutual trust and openness. Furthermore, the parliament of the Republic of Serbia adopted a law (Official Gazette No. 24/September 2001) which, inter alia, contains many provisions that facilitate cooperation with the ICTY.

During a recent visit to Belgrade, the Chief Prosecutor emphasized that she was satisfied with the cooperation of the competent authorities of Serbia and Montenegro and the Republic of Serbia. I am also pleased to say that during her visit to Podgorica, the Chief Prosecutor expressed her satisfaction at the full cooperation of the authorities of the Republic of Montenegro with the Tribunal.

An important item of two-way cooperation, perhaps the most important one, is the referral of cases in accordance with rule 11 bis of the Rules of Procedure and Evidence of the Tribunal. A few months mention was made of the importance of the Tribunal's Completion Strategy, and the referral of cases is one of the most important elements of the Completion Strategy. I would like to reiterate that we are ready for the referral of cases and willing and capable of conducting fair and impartial trials against perpetrators of war crimes.

The proceedings before the Council for War Crimes in Belgrade regarding the Ovcara case have been assessed by all relevant international observers as very successful and in line with international standards. I am confident that efficient cooperation will be continued and even promoted in the future. I would like to emphasize in particular that I would have recent a great deal to say that the Tribunal referred to Belgrade the Vukovi, Srijemci and Radic case for the crimes committed in Ovcara. We believe that the referral of this case to our judiciary would have been yet another powerful confirmation of the great progress achieved in cooperation over the past year.

Serbia and Montenegro's authorities have done everything to strengthen regional cooperation, first of all by strengthening police cooperation and cooperation among prosecutors' offices in the region. Prosecutors from Serbia and Montenegro, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina have met several times to explore and discuss further cooperation regarding the prosecution of war crimes. The Prosecutor of the Republic of Serbia has signed a memorandum of understanding with his counterparts from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. A similar memorandum is to be signed later this year with Macedonia. The Supreme Public Prosecutor of the Republic of Montenegro also signed a memorandum of understanding with Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We welcome the agreement between the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the ICTY allowing the closing 48x3

missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and further and Montenegro to monitor the war crimes trials transferred to the Entities and to the national courts. We are grateful to the OSCE, the United Nations Development Programme, the Council of Europe and those countries assisting the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Montenegro in amending their criminal legislation to accord with ICTY standards and providing training to prosecutors and judges dealing with the war crimes trials. In order to improve our capacity to prosecute war crimes, we are looking forward to further training opportunities.

The authorities of Serbia and Montenegro support the European Union Council of Ministers common position on measures for the effective implementation of the ICTY mandate relating to the freezing of the funds of fugitives. The National Council for Cooperation with the ICTY has directed the competent authorities to explore the possibilities of implementing restrictive measures in Serbia and Montenegro's legal system. The law on freezing the assets of fugitives is currently before the Union Parliament. In the meantime, the Belgrade District Court has imposed an interim measure freezing fugitives' funds and assets.

We are fully aware that complete reconciliation in the territory of former Yugoslavia is not possible unless the ICTY fulfils its mandate. Therefore, Serbia and Montenegro is ready to make its full contribution to the work of the ICTY and bring to justice all those responsible for war crimes committed in the territory of the former Yugoslavia, including Ratko Mladić.

Strong action aimed at meeting our international obligations vis-à-vis the ICTY, which we consider in our national interest and vitally important to our growing Euro-Atlantic integration, will be continued. The results achieved so far are the best proof of that.

Mr. Miadinov (Croatia): Croatia welcomes the Report of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) to the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. We have aligned ourselves with the statement made on behalf of the European Union by the United Kingdom.

I would like to extend my thanks to Judge Meron for his detailed report and for all his efforts to have the Tribunal fulfil its mandate in an efficient and effective manner. May I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to him for his enormous contribution to the work and administration of the Tribunal.

As representatives of my country have frequently noted, Croatia was one of the leading advocates for the establishment of the Tribunal, which has played a special part in achieving justice for the victims of the conflicts upon the territories which fall within its jurisdiction. Croatia has always maintained a strong interest in its success.

There are two issues which I shall address in this statement: Croatia's cooperation with the Tribunal and progress towards implementation of its Completion Strategy.

The Tribunal's Completion Strategy, which was introduced by the then President of the Tribunal, was endorsed by the Security Council in August 2003. The Strategy involves a three-step process encompassing the completion of investigations, trials and appeals within agreed timelines. The first of the benchmarks, namely, the completion of investigations, concluded at the end of 2004. We note that the report shows that the achievement of this benchmark has begun to be reflected in the staffing and budget of the Tribunal.

Apart from the conduct of trials, a vital part of the Completion Strategy is the work the Tribunal is undertaking with the national courts of the countries concerned. We commend these efforts, which will, among other things, strengthen the capacity of their courts and legal systems.

Work has been done to build the capacity of judges and lawyers in Croatia in readiness for the transfer to national jurisdiction of certain cases for prosecution. Four courts have been designated by the Croatian authorities to hear war crimes cases, and one such case, involving two accused, has recently been transferred.

We are pleased that the report generally comments objectively on the Tribunal's cooperation with the Croatian Government in regard to requests for assistance, particularly on cooperation with the Office of the State Prosecutor. However, the report omitted recent important events relating to Croatia's cooperation with the Tribunal, including the latest vital assessment of the Chief Prosecutor.

Since April 2003, Croatian authorities have been implementing an action plan for cooperation with the Tribunal, in particular with regard to the last outstanding issue, that of fugitive Ante Gotovina. Vigorous, comprehensive and persistent measures and

actions were taken to fully implement the commitments of the action plan, the key aim of which was for Croatia's authorities to do their utmost to locate, apprehend and transfer the fugitive Gotovina to the Tribunal. An important prerequisite was to ensure the unconditional efficiency of the security apparatus. The Tribunal has been kept continuously updated on all activities related to the implementation of the action plan.

The Croatian Government is convinced that all relevant authorities mandated for cooperation with the Tribunal have been doing everything possible to locate, arrest and transfer the fugitive. In their statements following the meeting with the Chief Prosecutor Carla Del Ponte in Zagreb on 30 September 2004, both the President and the Prime Minister of Croatia expressed Croatia's continuing full cooperation and commitment to resolve this issue. In his address to the European Union Ministerial Council meeting on 3 October 2005, after the decision of the European Union to open accession negotiations with Croatia, the Prime Minister reiterated that position.

Full compliance with the Tribunal is also demonstrated by the timely and comprehensive response to its requests regarding documents and witnesses. Judicial cooperation also continues smoothly. Efforts aimed at ensuring the political and operational support and assistance in the fugitive hunt always progress. The process of monitoring and investigation is thorough and result-oriented. The State Attorney's Office is leading Croatia's overall cooperation with the Tribunal. It also has particular responsibility for the implementation of the action plan.

The Chief Prosecutor, in her latest assessment to the European Union Task Force, on 3 October 2005, said that "Croatia is a State fully co-operating."

As has been said on many occasions by the Prime Minister, Croatia remains committed to continue implementing its action plan until the Gotovina matter is resolved. The Government views this as an indivisible part of its broader commitment to the rule of law. The commencement of negotiations with the European Union can only strengthen this resolve and assist the Government in the reforms that lie ahead. In this context, we firmly support the work of the Tribunal and its efforts to fulfil its mandate.

Mr. [redacted] (Rwanda): We would like to thank the President of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), Judge Erik Møse, for presenting the report of the Secretary-General to document S/2005/774. We commend the President, the Prosecutor and the Registrar of the Tribunal for their work over the past year to ensure the successful completion of its work by 2008.

Rwanda remains hopeful that the Tribunal will deliver justice against those who bear the greatest responsibility for the 1994 genocide. We pledge our continued support to ensure that the Tribunal's work runs as smoothly as possible.

According to the report before us, the trials of 21 persons have been completed, while the cases for a further 27 are in progress and 14 are awaiting trial, of which four have been identified for transfer to national courts. Further 14 indicted persons are still at large, four of whom the Prosecutor intends to transfer to national courts. Eight other cases have been investigated and submitted for confirmation, of which four will be transferred to national jurisdictions. On that, on the basis of the information, the Tribunal expects to have completed trial proceedings of up to 70 persons by 2008.

While we welcome the assessment of the completion period of the Tribunal by 2008, we regrettably recall that a few years ago the Tribunal had targeted for trial as many as 200 suspects who bear the greatest responsibility for the genocide. This figure was revised downward over the years, and today, we are talking of only 70 to 75, less than one quarter of the original figure. It is our assessment that, while the number of persons targeted for prosecution has gone down, serious accusations remain against some of the suspects who are no longer being considered targets for prosecution. Even as 11 those still targeted for prosecution, many remain at large and are being provided with a safe haven from international justice by Member States of the Organization. We appeal to the Prosecutor and the Security Council to enforce the relevant provisions of the Tribunal's Statute to ensure that all States cooperate and hand over their fugitives. We appeal to the Council to seriously consider this matter, with a view to ensuring that no suspect evades justice.

As we have said many times before, the Tribunal's Completion Strategy should not be seen as

an end strategy for the international community's obligations in bring all aspects of the crime of genocide to light at the ICTR in Rwanda or elsewhere. The witness issues of the cases of genocide suspects that we discuss this here is no exception.

As the Tribunal progresses towards the completion of its work, we should reflect on the impact it has had on justice and reconciliation in Rwanda, the principle reasons for which it was established in the first place. We believe that the impact of the Tribunal on these processes in Rwanda has been constrained because of the geographical distance between Arusha and Rwanda and the management and ethical problems that plagued the Tribunal in its earlier life. It would be most unfortunate for the Tribunal to complete its work without impacting Rwandans, or had been envisaged when it was established.

In this regard, we therefore welcome the decision to transfer at least 10 cases for trial in Rwanda. It is a widely accepted principle that trials should always take place as close as possible to where the crimes were committed. The crimes before the ICTR were committed in Rwanda. It is the Government's belief that all trials related to genocide should take place in Rwanda. This would address the problem of the impact of the ICTR on Rwanda and advance the cause of justice, while also combating impunity, as justice will not only be done, but will also be seen to be done by Rwandans in Rwanda. We also believe that a transfer of trials would promote national reconciliation and healing.

My Government has taken the necessary measures to provide the international community an assurance that the death penalty will not be exercised in any of the transferred cases. I wish to reiterate this commitment to the General Assembly and to state that the issue should no longer impede progress in the transfer process.

In view of the plans to transfer cases for prosecution to national jurisdictions, it is imperative that the Tribunal take appropriate action to support and strengthen Rwanda's capacity-building efforts so that the process can run smoothly. Capacity-building will also ensure a sustainable legacy for the Tribunal's work. We therefore welcome the work of the Registry, as outlined in paragraphs 43 and 44 of the report, but we encourage the Tribunal to intensify these efforts, particularly through recruitment of Rwandan lawyers and through mentoring and attachment programmes.

We also believe that it is critical that sentences be served inside Rwanda. This is another point that the Rwanda Government has advocated since 1994. Both common sense and natural justice require that sentences be served where the crimes were committed. This would also advance the cause of justice, combat impunity and promote national reconciliation. We appeal to the Tribunal to speed up the process of administering sentences in Rwanda, once the detention facility that meets United Nations standards was completed more than a year ago.

We appeal to the Registry to be more imaginative in implementing its outreach programme. A greater effort should be made to reach rural communities, where the impact of the genocide was the most devastating. In this regard, a greater effort should also be placed on working with local district authorities in developing programmes that are suited to communities.

Further, we would like to put on record my Government's appreciation to the leadership of the Tribunal for the continued improvement in its performance. We also commend the enlightenment of the witness management coordinator from Arusha to Kigali to assist witnesses. We commend the international community for its support to the Tribunal, particularly the Governments of Norway and the United Kingdom, which financed, through voluntary contributions, the construction of a locally confirmed that was inaugurated in March of this year.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in this debate on this agenda item.

May I take it that it is the will of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda items 76 and 77?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.5...